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CONVERSATIONS

ON

CHRISTIAN IDOLATRY,

In the Year

1791.

Published by Theophilus Lindsey, M.A.

L O N D O N :

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DISCLAIMER
In the course of the past few years
in speaking of the word of God
with brother and sister with the God and
Father of all words two other divine per-
sons have been in the thought of this
writing the following conversation which
has been foundation in real life though
imperfectly stated in their manner and in
the following conversation
but another could need to the publication
this year possibly
When I was young and deeply engaged
with the subject of the new order of the
world I remember that I was very much
written about after the following manner

48-12
6

THE
INTRODUCTION.

DISCOURSE with some private friends, concerning the justness and propriety of unitarian christians using the term *idolatrous*, in speaking of the worship of those christians, who together and equally with the God and Father of all, worship two other divine persons, first gave rise to the thought of publishing the following conversations: which have their foundation in real life, though somewhat varied in their manner and circumstances.

But another cause urged to the publication still more powerfully.

When I was musing, and deeply impressed with the subject, a well known letter of Melancthon to Camerarius came across my mind, written soon after (*a*) Servetus had printed his

(*a*) This learned and ingenious physician, who was afterwards burnt alive at Geneva, merely for propagating these opinions, and persisting in them, was little more than

book against the Trinity, asserting that Christ was only a man ; in which the former of these

than 20 years old, when he first published his sentiments ; in which he grew more confirmed, as he advanced in age. But although he could not see any grounds to think so highly of Christ as others, he entertained such reverence for him, that he is said to have died, *calling upon Christ in the midst of the flames*. And I have observed in his writings, invocations of Christ of a greater length. Socinus also, who lived some years after, whose sentiments are well known, maintained it to be even a duty to pray to Christ.

Socinus, and perhaps Servetus, held that the lordship and dominion ascribed to Christ, in the scriptures, implied, and authorized the worship of him, by prayer. Later writers also of what is called the Arian persuasion, have thought that the mediatorial office of Christ, to which they ascribe much more than is to be found in scripture, warranted the worship of him ; and that prayer sometimes, though not generally, might be made to him. But assuredly no delegated power or authority, which the scriptures ascribe to Christ, can authorize invocation of him in prayer, unless he himself, or his apostles, have expressly signified, that such is the will of God. A matter of such magnitude, as the setting up of a new God and object of worship, would not have been left to men's inferences, and conclusions, from phrases, which of themselves imported nothing of the kind ; but would have been made the subject of a plain command. For whatever, in respect of divine worship and prayer to any person, is not commanded in the sacred writings, is forbidden.

persons,

persons, noted for his humanity and moderation, very pathetically forebodes, and laments, the contentions, and miseries, but too much verified since even to this hour, that would be produced by the disputes then reviving, about (b) the *logos*, i. e. the word, and the *spirit*; which are the terms used by this great friend of Luther, to denote two of the divine persons that went to compose the trinity: but which certainly are not held out, either of them, to be gods distinct from the heavenly Father, with any very apparent degree of evidence, in the sacred writings; and therefore about which many might well entertain doubts.

And I could not help immediately saying to myself; that from the rapid progress of

(b) *Περὶ τῆς τριάδος* scis me semper veritum esse, fore, ut hæc aliquando erumperent. Bone Deus! quales tragedias excitabit hæc quæstio ad posteros, εἰ εἰν ὑποστάσις ὁ λόγος; εἰ εἰν ὑποστάσις τὸ πνεῦμα; i. e. "You know that I was always afraid that these disputes about the trinity would break out some time or other. Good God! what sad tragedies will take rise among those that come after us, from the controversy, whether the *logos* be a person; whether the *spirit* be a person?"

See an account of Calvin's treatment of Servetus, p. 165, 166.

free inquiry, and improvement in the knowledge of the scriptures, for some years past, still daily increasing; and from the very great plainness, and perspicuity, with which the doctrine of the divine unity is delivered throughout the Bible; it could not fail but that the gross deviations from this doctrine, among all bodies of christians, but particularly discernible in the liturgy of the church of England, a form of devotion in other respects most admirable, must soon be descried by multitudes of that communion, and excite no small ferment and disturbance amongst them, without some proper preparation, and instruction given them relating to it.

For how much soever the point has been industriously perplexed by vain learning and philosophy, there is no kind of difficulty in deciding upon it; namely, whether there be one God, one divine person, whom we are to worship; or three divine persons, three Gods, to whom we are to offer up our prayers.

There is only one book in the world to be consulted about it; the Bible. And no learning is necessary for the interpretation of that book, in this grand article; only to take it up,

up, to learn what it contains upon the subject, and not to bring along with us to the reading of it, what *we think* it ought to contain, and have before been taught by our nurses and priests, and are resolved not to give up.

To allay, or rather to prevent such religious heats and convulsions, of all others the most to be avoided, I believed it would be of use to give to the public, what presented itself on the subject, to a select society of serious persons, of good sense, conversing upon it; *viz.*

—the strong evidence that was
The second day. produced from scripture, of the absolute unity of God; and that the blessed Jesus received his existence, and all his powers from him;

—that in the account of God
The third day. himself, and of Jesus Christ, it is idolatry to pay divine honours to a creature, and of course to worship this humble but now exalted Saviour;

—that however, this idolatry of christians, in worshipping Christ, which has been of so long duration, and so widely extended, is of

a very different nature from the heathen idolatry, so severely condemned in the sacred writings, and will not affect the future happiness of those, who are sincere in it, and who having had no opportunities of knowing better, live up to the light they have: although it be a thing much to be lamented, and a continual disgrace to the gospel, and hindrance to its reception in the world;

The fourth and fifth day. —and, after various arguments, ineffectually proposed, to take off every scruple of joining with others in prayer, where it was in part offered to wrong objects in the esteem of the worshiper; something turned up at the last, concerning what might best be done by those, who could not remain in the communion and worship of the church of England, for fear of the reproach and condemnation of their own minds, in worshipping Jesus, and the holy spirit, whom they did not believe to be gods, or to be worshiped.

How sorely both the churches of England and of Rome, which equally embrace and hold sacred the Athanasian doctrine, and worship, have departed from the purity and simplicity, which are expressly taught and in-
joined

joined in the sacred volume, I chuse to deliver in the weighty words, and remonstrance, of a learned and venerable clergyman (c) of the church of England; who only a very few years ago, took leave of mortal things, a°. 1786; hoping thereby to draw the more attention to it; and that, if his arguments,

(c) This pious and excellent person, of singular integrity, humility, and a patriarchal simplicity of character, had a small benefice in Suffex; and finished a laborious and useful life, at the age of 80. For some years towards the close of it, he was in very depressed circumstances, through the ill behaviour of a very near relation, to whose wants he had been too indulgent.

He made himself easy in his continuance in the church, by omitting some things in the service, and making alterations in others. Thus in the Litany, he left out the 3d and 4th invocations, those of the holy ghost, and the holy trinity; and in the 2d, instead of *O God the Son*, redeemer of the world, &c. he put it, *O Son of God*, redeemer of the world; it being his mistaken persuasion, as of the eminent persons mentioned in the preceding note, that prayer might sometimes be directed to Christ, not as God, but as one impowered and commissioned by him occasionally to hear it.

Mr. Hopkins's aged Diocesan, Sir William Ashburnham, still living, to his honour, never listened to any complaints against him for his nonconformity; but, on the contrary, sometimes distinguished him in public by his kind and particular notice.

taken

taken wholly from scripture, be powerful and convincing to others, as to me they appear, our country will not be the last to renounce a worship, proved to be directly forbidden by the Almighty himself.

Extract from a translation of Exodus, with notes critical and explanatory, By William Hopkins, B.A. Vicar of Bolney, and Master of the Grammar-School of Cuckfield, Sussex, printed for Johnson, St. Paul's Church-yard, 1784.

Note on Exodus xx. 3. p. 145. &c.

“ But before I quit this xxth chapter of Exodus, 'tis highly expedient, if not absolutely necessary, to make some observations upon the first and great commandment; “*Tbou shalt have no other Gods but Me;*” which must necessarily signify, if there be any meaning in language, *one supreme intelligent Being or Person, Lord and Governor, endued with all possible perfection, power, knowlege, wisdom, goodness, and patience; or, as he is described in the New Testament, “The one God and Father of all;”* and more particularly,

ticularly, *of our Lord Jesus Christ*. Agreeably to this plain, rational, and fundamental doctrine, and that the real *Unity of God* might appear, not only as a truth, but a truth of great importance, Moses has in the most solemn manner determined; (Deut. vi. 4.) "*Hear, O Israel, Jehovah our God is one Jehovah;*" and strongly inculcates the duty we owe to him in the verse following."

"The Christian Lawgiver, our blessed Saviour Jesus Christ, has established, by his express authority, the same solemn determination of Moses, by citing his very words; and, in answer to a question proposed to him by one of the Scribes: "*Which is the first commandment of all?*" And Jesus answered him, "*The first of all the commandments is, Hear, O Israel, Jehovah our God is one Jehovah.*" Our Saviour likewise inculcates our duty to the one supreme Being, in very strong terms, in the verse following."

"By what rightful authority then have the greatest mortals determined, that there are two other persons equally intitled to honour, worship, and glory with the *One supreme God*, and that they, together with him, form one

supreme Being? A doctrine absolutely inconsistent with the principles of reason, and expressly contrary to above two thousand texts in the Old Testament, and above a thousand in the New, (I speak upon examination) which either strongly set forth, or necessarily imply, the *Unity* of God in the strict and literal sense. I am afraid that the Athanasian doctrine and worship seem little less than a breach of the covenant established between God and the Jewish people in the Old Testament, and between God and all mankind in the New.

The governors of the church should be exhorted, in the most earnest manner, to take speedy and effectual methods to review our public forms, and reduce them to the standard of scripture. In the beginning of the Litany, there are invoked Four distinct objects of religious worship, which form of worship has not the least foundation, or even colour of evidence to support it, from the beginning of the Old to the end of the New Testament; and the learned of all denominations are challenged to produce any acts of religious worship to Four distinct objects."

" The

“ The Ten Commandments are read in the morning service of all the churches of England, and Ireland, every Lord’s-day ; and at the same time, a doctrine and form of worship are kept up in express contradiction to the first and great commandment.”

“ Christian professors have often condemned the Jews for their prejudices and blindness, that they do not see and acknowledge the Messiah, of whom there are so many clear prophecies delivered in their own scriptures. On the other hand, the Jews, I think, may with equal justice, retort a similar charge upon great numbers of professed Christians, who tho’ they are perpetually reading, or hearing read the ten commandments, in the first of which God is declared to be *One*, in words not possible to be interpreted in any other sense, yet in defiance to the clearest and strongest light, they presume to acknowledge and worship *Three coequal Gods* in one substance. If the New Testament really maintained this absurd and corrupt doctrine, it would be an unanswerable argument that it never came from God, it being impossible that the two Testaments should contradict each

each other in this grand and fundamental article, the *Unity* of God, on which all true religion is founded. But, to our rational satisfaction, Moses and Christ are fully agreed in maintaining this essential doctrine, as we have already seen; and it is the express duty of all churches, through every part of the globe, to remove all forms that break in upon this important point of the *Unity* of God."

One is sorry to have cause to remark, that it would seem, as if christians, in settling the object of their worship, had, almost from the beginning, set aside, or forgotten, this first and great commandment of heaven; to which this worthy person is so earnest to bring them back. Of what infinite moment, and how absolutely necessary it is to have an eye always to it, is seen in the course of the conversations, to which I am now to introduce my reader.

THE EDITOR.

THE

**THE SUBJECTS
OF EACH DAY'S CONVERSATION.**

THE FIRST DAY.

*Volufian objects to the worship of Jesus Christ
being called idolatrous.*

THE SECOND DAY.

*Volufian declares himself convinced, that Jesus
Christ is not God, nor to be worshiped; but
only the creature, and highly favoured servant
of God.*

THE THIRD DAY.

*Volufian is satisfied that the worship of Jesus
Christ is idolatrous.*

THE

THE FOURTH DAY.

Volufian perceives, that he cannot by any plea, reconcile himself to frequent the worship of the church of England, now that he looks upon it to be idolatrous.

THE FIFTH DAY.

Volufian fees, how easily, and with what honour and credit, the service of the church of England may be reformed, with respect to the object of divine worship, in which it is now sadly erroneous.

CONVERSATIONS

ON

CHRISTIAN IDOLATRY.

PHOTINUS TO VICTORIN;

Relating the beginning of a conversation, among a select set of friends, in which Volusian objected to the worship of Jesus Christ being called idolatrous.

YOU desire to be informed of what passed lately at *****, where several of your acquaintance are wont sometimes to meet at the hospitable mansion of our common friend, whom I shall for the present call MARCELLINUS, not far from the banks of glassy, sober ****; and there, as in a college in a purer air, discuss together a variety of subjects, new and old.

B

I shall

I shall have a pleasure in obliging you. But as you also wish to have it in your power to gratify others, having heard that the subject was of some importance, you will not think the few short illustrations I have given unnecessary, and will excuse the disguise put upon names and places, which you will be at no loss to understand.

THE FIRST DAY.

IT was one day during the late summer vacation, that the company being assembled in our friend's library, after talking over many indifferent matters, the conversation naturally turned on the recent riots at Birmingham, the eternal disgrace of our country, as well as of the age we live in: when Marcellinus, well versed, as you know, in things human and divine, and who loves his country and mankind, willing to make the best apology he could for such an infernal transaction, in burning the houses of peaceable citizens, and among them, of a christian and philosopher of the first rank, purely for a difference in religious

religious opinions, laid the whole blame of it upon the laws of the state.

MARCELLINUS.

These, proceeds he, encourage such dark and cruel bigotry, by making an unnatural distinction and difference between dissenters and churchmen, in not allowing the former to enjoy any civil employment, without conforming to the established religion in one of its most sacred ordinances. This makes them looked upon by all ranks with an evil eye, as dangerous persons, enemies to the church, who are not to be trusted in any office without giving such a solemn declaration of their regard for it; while at the same time they hold them in contempt for such a mean compliance and submission against their known principles. But every wise government will exert itself to discourage such a narrow, intolerant spirit, and avoid putting snares in men's way, which tend to undermine their virtue and integrity.

Locke, in his noble Letter on Toleration, which seems now to be a book quite forgotten, and others since his time, may have written

ever so plainly and divinely, and have proved, that religion is a concern only between each man and his Maker, in which the civil magistrate has no business to interfere; and that no man can lawfully be abridged (*a*) of his just civil rights for his religious sentiments and practice, whilst he demeans himself peaceably. But nothing will correct men's errors and inveterate prejudices to the contrary, which are as antient as from the days of Constantine, the first christian emperor; and teach them what is reasonable and right, so long as the law of the state (*b*) teaches the contrary,

(*a*) "Those, whose doctrine is peaceable, and whose manners are pure and blameless, ought to be upon equal terms with their fellow-subjects. Thus if solemn assemblies, observations of festivals, public worship, be permitted to any one sort of professors; all these things ought to be permitted to the *presbyterians*, *anabaptists*, *arminians*, *quakers*, and others, with the same liberty. Nay, if we may openly speak the truth, and as becomes one man to another, neither *pagan* nor *mahometan*, nor *jew*, ought to be excluded from the civil rights of the commonwealth, because of his religion." Locke on Toleration. Mr. Hollis's Edition, p. 63.

(*b*) "Take away the partiality that is used towards them in matters of common right, change the laws, take away
away

contrary, and puts such a brand on one class of subjects, as supposes them enemies to their country for their religious opinions.

Such discouragement of dissenters, and leaving them without hope of redress of so great an evil, is a very short-sighted policy, unknown to the first princes of the house of Hanover; and which our present sovereign would be very far from encouraging, if properly signified to him. If these men, who have in trying times approved themselves to be the true friends of that family, continue to be stigmatized and aggrieved by unequal laws, they will naturally combine together, and use every lawful endeavour to procure the

away the penalties unto which they are subjected, and all things will immediately become safe and peaceable: nay, those that are averse to the religion of the magistrate, will think themselves so much more bound to maintain the peace of the commonwealth, as their condition is better in that place than elsewhere; and all the several separate congregations, like so many guardians of the public peace, will watch one another, that nothing may be innovated and changed in the form of the government: because they can hope for nothing better than what they already enjoy; that is, an equal condition with their fellow-subjects, under a just and moderate government." Ibid. p. 61, 62.

relief, to which they have an undeniable claim. Persuaded that they have truth and justice on their side, which cannot be confuted, nor extinguished, even by the fiery arguments lately used at Birmingham, and that the God and governor of the world is with them, they will never cease to solicit for their just rights, till obtained.

Minute politicians may be apt to make light of these remarks as weak and superstitious. But we should all do well to take the moral governor of the world and his demands upon us, more into our plans; lest we be found, by leaving him out, only to embroil the public more in everlasting dissension and confusion.

The times are totally different from what they were fourscore or a hundred years ago. Although the experience of the present year has shewn us how blind high-churchmen and Tories still are, a degree of blindness and intolerance which was utterly unexpected; nevertheless the light of truth, and the knowledge of men's civil and religious rights is increased to such a degree as cannot now be stifled; but will expand itself more and more. Men will
not

not only think freely on these most important topics, which indeed no power can prevent; but will hold it a duty to publish their thoughts, and to act as they dictate, whilst they give no reasonable offence to the governing powers.

Marcellinus was thus rapidly going on with his free remarks, when ****, whom I shall name VOLUSIAN, of no small eminence in a learned and honourable profession, a warm advocate for the established church, but a greater friend to virtue and goodness, addressed himself to him somewhat abruptly.

VOLUSIAN.

I beg pardon, my friend, for interrupting the effusions of your fervent and liberal mind, which are always agreeable, though sometimes eccentric, to me at least. I declare, however, my intire acquiescence in the greatest part of what you have advanced, particularly that men were not to be abridged in any of their civil rights for their religious opinions; that the whole history of the Test-laws, and their imposition at this day upon dissenters, is a discredit as well as detriment to the

country; and that it was the strict duty of every government to allow men their different religious worship after their own mode, without any penalty, restraint, or hindrance whatsoever, so long as they did nothing therein to disturb the public peace; and that this was no more a favour, than to allow them to breathe the air, or see the light of the sun.

I hope then, continues he, that it will be granted me that I am for liberty as much as any one, so far as is consistent with the peace and happiness of the whole community; though I confess I cannot in some things go the lengths that Marcellinus would have me. All men ought certainly to enjoy their opinions, and follow what appears to them right: but there ought to be some reserve and limitation, in not permitting them to publish sentiments that are likely to throw the whole state into convulsions.

I condemn, Marcellinus, no less than you, the outrages committed at Birmingham, and the particular atrocious attempts against Dr. Priestley, and injuries done to him. And I blush at the report but too much verified, of many of higher rank rejoicing over what has befallen

befallen him; which looks too much, as if they would not have been sorry, if, after setting fire to his house and library, he himself had been thrown into the flames with them.

But then it must be allowed that, his severe censures of the doctrine and worship of our church, and predictions of its downfall, if it do not reform itself according to his plan, may have contributed to excite, however wrongly, some of this bad spirit, which has appeared against him.

For my own part, I must declare, that when first I became accidentally acquainted with a Sermon of his preached this very year, on the anniversary of the foundation of their New College at Hackney, I was so disturbed, that I did not know what to do, or how to think of myself, on account of his so bluntly and peremptorily declaring the worship of Jesus Christ to be idolatrous.

Such a crude, unqualified declaration coming from so celebrated a name, must either raise passion and indignation against him, for such a rude attack upon what a man has hitherto held most sacred, the God he worships; or create gloomy fears and apprehensions, which
he

he will not know how to quiet, about a matter of such infinite moment. In short, why disturb people about such merely speculative points, which are never fully to be comprehended, and not rather confine his teachings to what relates to a good life and practice?

MARCELLINUS.

I think, my friend, replies Marcellinus, you do not act with your wonted candour, in so directly and unreservedly blaming a christian preacher for apprizing his hearers, on a very solemn occasion, of an error of great consequence, which almost universally has obtained among christians, and for terming it, idolatry; which the worship of Jesus Christ really is, if he be so far from God, that he is only his creature, and a creature of the human race.

This is not a novel sentiment; nor is it only of late that it has been produced by this author; but which for many years he has thought it his duty to declare and to testify. There is here in the library a volume of his tracts, which contains the Sermon, preached in the dissenters' place of worship at Birmingham,

ham, in 1780, on his undertaking the pastoral office among them, in which he introduces the mention of this point. And he does it with so much seriousness and calmness, that those who may not like the doctrine, will not be displeased with the preacher; and therefore, Volufian, if you will give me leave, and the rest of our friends, I shall read the passage to you. Upon the company readily declaring their assent, Marcellinus took the book, and read as follows.

—“ Of these corrupt doctrines, the seeds of which were sown in a very early age, none gives so much just cause of alarm, and therefore ought more to excite the zeal of the truly enlightened friends of pure christianity, and who wish well to its propagation among jews and mahometans, than that relapse into *idolatry*, with which many who call themselves christians are justly chargeable; an *idolatry*, similar to that which it was the great object of the jewish and christian religions to overturn. For, in consequence of the worship of saints and angels in the church of Rome, the true God is almost as much lost sight of as he was in the heathen world, who worshipped stocks

and stones, under the notion of their being emblems or representatives of the divinity."

" Though this idolatry proceeded till it came to the worship of a piece of bread, as supposed to be the real body and blood of Christ, it began with paying divine honours to Christ himself: who though the most distinguished messenger of God to man, himself uniformly asserted the proper unity of the Divine Being, and spoke of his Father, exclusively of all other persons, or beings, as *the only true God*. (John xvii. 3.) his Father as well as our Father, and his God as well as our God; (John xx. 17.) and whose highest title is, *the mediator between God and man, the man* Christ Jesus. (1 Tim. ii. 5.) Observe the apostle says *the man*, not *the God*, or the God-man, or super-angelic being, but simply the man Christ Jesus. Though he reigns, he only reigns in subordination to that great being who put all things under his feet, and to whom he must at length resign his delegated authority, that God, the only living and true God, even the Father, may be all in all. 1 Cor. xv. 28."

" In

“ In agreement with this, and with no other idea concerning Christ, the author of the epistle to the Hebrews speaks of our Lord, as being, in all respects, *like unto his brethren*; and he is elsewhere stiled our elder brother. In agreement with this, we also read, that as by *man* came death, by *man* came also the resurrection of the dead. 1 Cor. xv. 21.”

“ Our Saviour, therefore, differs from us, not with respect to his proper nature, but only in the great perfection of his character, and in divine communications. Agreeably to which, he himself expressly disclaims all power originating with himself; saying that the words which he spake were not his own, but the Father's that sent him, and that it was the Father within him that did the works, (John xiv. 10.) that is, the miracles which he wrought. Now what truth could there have been in this, if he had done these things by any proper divinity, or indeed any extraordinary power of his own, independant of that of his Father.”

“ After the worship of Christ, the worship of his virgin mother was a very easy consequence ;

quence; and then so wide a breach being once made, in the doctrine of the divine unity, there entered an innumerable host of men and angels, and in times of ignorance and superstition, many names of mere heathens, and some absolute nonentities."

"It is well known that it is this doctrine of a multiplicity of persons in the Deity, or, which is the very same thing, a multiplicity of Gods, at which jews and mahometans chiefly stumble. It is the doctrine of the proper divine unity that they are continually upbraiding the christian world with departing from: and while they consider christians as Idolaters, it is no wonder that the christian name is held in abhorrence by them, and that their conversion is effectually prevented."

"For these important considerations, though it has been, and will be a general practice, to confine my addresses from the pulpit to the enforcing of such doctrines and duties, as all christians are agreed in acknowledging, and which are certainly of the greatest importance to the happiness of individuals in this life, and the next; I shall not fail to hold up to your view, with its proper evidence, and as
much

much energy as I can give to it, this great doctrine of the proper unity of God, and also some others nearly connected with it. I mean such as exhibit the moral character and government of God in such a light as shall make us rejoice in the consideration of our being the subjects of it; in opposition to such opinions concerning the divine nature, and his government over us, as tend to make us regard him as an object of horror."

This liberal language was very acceptable to a people, who had been already taught to judge for themselves concerning the sacred writings, and every thing that was held forth to their consideration from them, by their ministers. The gentleman, still living, whose resignation, on account of ill health, made way for Dr. Priestley, was a very accomplished scholar, and compleat unitarian, with singularly just and comprehensive views of christianity; excelling greatly also as a teacher, and in the devotional parts of his office, and adorning his doctrine by the purity of his manners.

And I have heard it reported of this gentleman's immediate predecessor, Mr. Bourne, who is still remembered by some among them
with

with singular veneration, for his most useful and indefatigable labours, especially with respect to the younger part of his congregation; that at times, when he has been called to preach in strange places at a distance, he was wont to ask the clerk before-hand; Well, friend! how many Gods do you worship here? and who are they?"

And that Dr. Priestley should in this free manner speak his own sentiments to a congregation, with whom he was going to be so intimately connected as their teacher, and warn them of what he believed so grievous a corruption of the gospel, seems to have been no more than a duty on his part, nor can it give just cause of offence to any one, that he should afterwards publish them for their benefit. It is the line of conduct which you, Volufian, would have pursued in the like circumstances, and with the same conviction of the truth and importance of the doctrine; for I know your ardent, honest mind. Indeed, had you a better knowledge of him, and of his unwearied labours, in his department as a minister of the gospel, and in various other ways to serve mankind, it would remove many prejudices.

But

But if in any thing Dr. Priestley will deserve to be particularly remembred as a benefactor of mankind, it will be for the light that he has thrown upon theological subjects, and the scriptures.

And upon a general view of what he has accomplished in this way, (supposing him to be mistaken in some points, for I do not deem him infallible,) he seems to have been raised up by providence, to help to preserve divine revelation and the gospel from being overwhelmed with idolatry and superstition, and from being totally rejected by the rational part of mankind.

Forgive him, if he has indiscreetly poured out too much light all at once with respect to the *divine unity*; and where other great names of our nation, have hesitated, and stopt short, or have had their writings and testimony suppressed, has brought the whole truth into open day; and hath asserted and proved, that the single person of the parent of the universe, is God, by himself, alone; and neither Christ, nor any other person any thing, but the creatures of his power, and the objects of his bounty and favour.

VOLUSIAN.

Volusian's prejudices were here a little excited, and taking up the matter with some warmth, he said; I am far from denying, that the commendations you have given to this famous person, may not be just to a certain degree. His moral character I would by no means impeach; but a restless love of novelty, and a desire of distinguishing himself by advancing singular notions, is evidently his failing. And you might be much better employed, Marcellinus, than in reading his books, which indeed follow one another with such speed, as hardly to give a man space to take breath in the intervals. They serve only to make you dissatisfied with all that has ever been said, or written, by all that have gone before him; and by the freedoms taken with antient authors and the scriptures, he seems likely in the end to lead you into the wilds of absolute scepticism.

For my part, I am content to go to heaven in the way that others have gone before me. I aim not to be wise above what is written. Being bred up, and from the scriptures well grounded in the belief, that Jesus Christ is
God,

God, and to be worshiped, and always accustomed to pay this worship to him, I cannot endure the rudeness and impertinence, to say the least, of the man, who tells me, that I am an idolater in it.

PHOTINUS.

Here Photinus interposed, who had not before delivered any sentiment : and said very calmly ;

I should have been better pleased, Volusian, to have heard you express yourself with less vehemence upon the subject which we have inadvertently fallen upon, and which you yourself have brought forward. I wish it does not shew that you have not sufficiently considered it, and speak without proper knowledge of the very great difficulties, to say the least, attending the opinion you espouse. May I take the liberty to ask, whether you ever, in all your life, once sat down seriously to search the scriptures, to know how many Gods there are ; whether one or more ; and whether Jesus Christ was one of them : as I can hardly suppose you will hold him to be the only God, which some of late have strangely maintained.

This was rather a heavy accusation, as well as a question, quite out of the ordinary rules of politeness, in which however it will be well, if we are not gone into a wrong extreme : but it shews the more rational terms on which the company lived with each other. Volusian was however somewhat picqued at being thus publicly examined as it were, about his faith, and rather hastily replied ;

VOLUSIAN.

It is very extraordinary, my friend, that you should imagine me to have lived to these years, and never to have made proper inquiry after the God I worship, and to whom I owe my being. I confess I have not made the scriptures my particular study, as my profession you know leads me quite away to other things. Yet I have always read the fine moral lessons of the Bible, with peculiar satisfaction, and I have sometimes attended to the proofs deduced from the writings both of the Old and New Testament, for the divinity of Christ, and the doctrine of the Trinity, and have been intirely satisfied with them. But in general we leave these theological matters to
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be settled by our Divines, those especially of the upper ranks ; who are so liberally provided for, that they may devote themselves to this and their other duties ; and who are always ready by reason and scripture to defend the common faith, and acquit themselves so well in it. And being persuaded that this has been the doctrine of christians for many ages, and I believe from the very first, I must again say, that I like not to be disturbed, and set afloat at my time of life, when I have no leisure, and less relish for such intricate inquiries.

PHOTINUS.

I am much concerned, replied Photinus, if I have given you any just cause of offence ; but you must excuse me still in further saying, that you have rather confirmed my suspicions by talking in such a superficial manner of your examination of the scriptures concerning so important a subject. You would be far from acting so negligently in a law-suit, in which your own, and much more, in which another's property was concerned. Here you would take pains in examining facts yourself,

and in coming at evidence, and whatever could throw light upon the matter.

And surely, how much soever your studies and thoughts may have taken another ply, and have been confined to the business of your profession; yet as you have a firm belief of the divine revelation made in our sacred writings, and of course look for a life to come, in which you are to be responsible for the improvement of the light and talents given you; it cannot but be a matter of some consequence to you, to see clearly with your own eyes, without trusting to those of your church and priest, who is the God you worship; whether Jesus Christ be this God; or whether he be only his favoured creature, messenger and prophet, as those whom you censure maintain, and appeal to the scriptures for the truth of their assertions.

Whatever difficulty you may suppose there to be in making this inquiry, I am convinced it will all vanish, when you set yourself in earnest about it.

To settle this point, you need not to have recourse to the fathers, as they call them, of this age, or of that age. There is no neces-

sity

fity of looking into the voluminous commentaries on the scriptures, of former, or the present times; which generally serve only to perplex a plain subject. The reading of the original record itself, which all profess to comment upon, and from which they form their opinions, is no such prolix business for any one, for you especially, who are in the habit of consulting old records and reading over acts of parliament.

Nor is there any uncertainty in the record itself, particularly the New Testament, from the vast variety of various readings of the manuscripts, but, on the contrary, a greater confirmation that thereby we approximate to the very original words of the sacred writers. And for the passages to which you allude, whose genuineness Dr. Priestley calls in question, they do not at all affect the point in debate, nor detract from the authenticity of the other parts of the revelation.

My good friend, leave your divines to settle their own faith, for assuredly they have nothing to do with your's, or any body's but their own. You may be able in a few days, I had almost said, in a few hours, to satisfy

yourself, with your own eyes, about this momentous part of it, the God you are to worship,

And pardon me saying, that it is incumbent on you to do it. For, as an excellent person, (c) I remember, well observes; "other subjects contain only matter of speculation, but this immediately concerns our practice, in our daily addresses to heaven: in which a serious christian will earnestly desire satisfaction, and I think cannot have true peace, till he has used earnest endeavours to know his duty in it."

And this good effect will follow, that when you have once settled your opinions on mature inquiry, you will not be moved with what others say of you or them. For it is in general owing, either to our being in the dark concerning the grounds of our religious opinions, whether solid or not, or the being too much interested in retaining them, that we are so angry oftentimes, and offended with others censure of them.

But it is time to quit the subject, which I perceive is beginning to make us all too

(c) Emlyn.

thoughtful.

thoughtful. Let us then take a walk into the lawn before us, to dissipate our thoughts, and refresh ourselves with the pleasing breeze, and beautiful scenes of the country, and its various hues at this season; not a little heightened by yond not very distant road, where busy man is hurrying along; some intent on business, others pursuing pleasure, and all right, if only due moderation and virtue accompany them,

PHOTINUS

PHOTINUS TO VICTORIN;

Relating a further conversation, in which Volusian declares himself convinced, that Jesus Christ is not God, nor to be worshiped; but only the creature, and highly favoured servant of God.

Of the character of Photinus, and state of opinions, before and in his time.

THE real Photinus, whom you inquire after, and whose name has been assumed by your present correspondent, one of the parties in the conference I am reporting to you; was a bishop of Sirmium, of great note, about the middle of the 4th century; very learned, of unblemished character, and such engaging manners, that after he was condemned in several councils for his opinions, it was found difficult, we are told, to remove him, because of the affection the people of Sirmium had for him, who would not part with him.

A cotemporary historian, not favourable to his opinions, describes him as naturally eloquent, fitted to persuade men, and that he gained

gained many to his way of thinking concerning God and Christ.

His sentiments, according to the same historian, Sozomen, were; "that there is one God Almighty, who by his own word made all things; and he did not allow the eternal generation and subsistence of the Son, but said that Christ began to be, when he was born of Mary."

He is spoken of as the disciple of Marcellus, bishop of Ancyra, and probably was a native of that city.

The bishops assembled at Sirmium, are said to have deposed him, having found that he held the doctrine of Sabellius of Lybia, and of Paul of Samosata.

Sabellius was of Upper Lybia, in the middle of the 3d century; where we are informed many bishops embraced his sentiments concerning Christ.

Paul of Samosata flourished somewhat later, a°. 260, was bishop of Antioch, reckoned the third see in rank. There he was befriended by king Odenatus, and after his death, by his widow, queen Zenobia. She is generally acknowledged to have been a lady
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of a fine understanding, and a very superior character in all respects, and a favourer of the doctrine of the divine unity taught by Paul. Longinus, the celebrated critic, was patronized by her.

Austin mentions some followers of Photinus, in his sermons; and says, that their opinions were, "that Christ was a man, and a great prophet, and excelled all men, the best and most knowing, in wisdom and holiness; but he was not God. They said, that the Father only is God, and Christ a man: and they denied the personality of the spirit."

Vincent of Lerins, in the next century, says that "Photinus entered upon the bishopric of Sirmium with universal applause; and that he was a man of ready wit, extensive learning, and charming eloquence, and therefore was a great temptation. He spoke and wrote properly and elegantly both in Greek and Latin, of which his remaining works are a proof, there being some in each language."

This little history, Victorin, of a man, whose writings are highly commended by writers of those times, but which have been destroyed by time, by negligence, or more probably

probably by design; shews, how ignorant they are, who speak of unitarian christians as a novel sect, and hardly brought into name or notice before the time of Socinus, about 200 years ago. Whereas it may be most truly said; that there is no such thing as a trinitarian christian mentioned or supposed in the New Testament; all there named being perfect unitarians, the blessed Jesus himself, his apostles and all his followers. Soon after indeed heathenism and a false philosophy were imported into the church by learned men, who took the lead in it, and who went on corrupting the doctrine of Christ, in this point, more and more; till it ended in the worship of him as being the supreme God, and of saints and images, together with him; which lasted throughout the whole christian world, for very many ages, when, in some respects, a reformation took place in our own and some other countries. But in all this period, there were unitarian christians, sometimes fewer, sometimes in greater numbers.—No more however of this now. I detain you too long from the sequel of the conversation at our friend's, which you are so desirous of seeing.

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THE SECOND DAY.

SOON after what had passed, as related in my last rescript, Volusian was obliged to quit the party on a call of business to his own house, which was at some distance; but expressed his hopes, with some earnestness, that they would not separate before he came back.

Upon his return within about a week, the next morning, when the same company was assembled in the library as usual, after breakfast, Volusian took up Griesbach's edition of the New Testament, which lay upon the table, and turning to the preface to the epistles, could not refrain from commending the integrity of the worthy and learned editor; who, although a believer in the divinity of Jesus Christ, had not allowed two of the passages commonly alleged for it to be genuine; but had observed; that Acts xx. 28. should be read, not *feed the church* of God, but *feed the church* of the Lord, *which he hath purchased with his own blood*: and that 1 Tim. iii. 16. should be, not *God*, but *which*, was manifest in the flesh;

and moreover, had cast out of the sacred text as spurious, the passage i Joh. v. 7, of the three heavenly witnesses.

VOLUSIAN.

I expect, my friends, proceeds he; you will be somewhat surprized to hear from me an elogium of this kind; who, although never speaking but with reverence of the scriptures, have not been wont to throw out such free criticisms upon them. But indeed there has been a great revolution in my mind, since we were last together, and I am eager to acquaint you with it.

When all of them expressed, that they had no less earnest a desire to hear what he had to tell them; Volusian resumed the discourse;

You can have no idea, says he, of the strong impression made upon me by what Photinus observed, of some even sensible and decent characters, having never once seriously taken the scriptures into their hands to see and examine for themselves, what they teach of God; whether there were three divine persons, each of them God, and to be worshipped; or the Divine Being was one person only,

only, and who alone was to be worshiped, I was conscious to myself, that I had never done this with that attention it demanded; and I felt inwardly ashamed and self-condemned, that I should have perused other books with so much care and exactness, and spent so little time and thought on this, which professes in many parts to speak directly from God.

I was also much moved by what was said, of the important matter in debate, not being merely a speculative point, of which I became most fully convinced, but what I was every day called out to act upon; *viz.* whether I was to look up for aid and protection, to three divine persons, or to one only; and if to three, a difficulty now for the first time started into my mind, to which of them I was to give the preference, and when to invoke each. What was remarked likewise of the easiness of searching the scriptures for this purpose, and the dispatch with which it might be accomplished, gave me encouragement; and I resolved to make the trial.

I alleged at parting, that I had some necessary business to transact, which was indeed
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the case ; but I had also another more pressing errand that you little suspected ; which was, to sequester myself, for a few days, to attend to this most important inquiry that could engage my thoughts, as I viewed it ; and as it really is.

No sooner then was I arrived at ***** , and had finished the affair, which had called me away from you, when, with great avidity, I took the Bible into my hands, and spent a great part of the night and the three following days, before I had satisfied myself, and digested my thoughts upon what I found there. For enjoying the benefit of a large and valuable assortment of books, not all of my own collection, and many among them being of a freer cast than I had hitherto troubled myself with ; upon any obscurity presenting itself in any passage of the scriptures, about which I could not satisfy myself, I could not think that I did myself or the subject justice, if I did not see what had been advanced on all sides. And this took up no small time.

I began with the books of Moses, and then went on through the rest of the Old Testament, perusing them in order, and with all

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the impartiality I was capable of; endeavouring not to carry along with me any bias or prejudice one way or the other, but to be as indifferent about the result of my inquiries, as if I was reading any other book to which I was an intire stranger: for this I thought to be the only fair way of proceeding, and of coming at the truth.

When I expected to have easily found the doctrines I had been taught in early youth, and had believed upon good grounds, as I thought; particularly that of a second god, who afterwards became the man Christ Jesus; I was struck with intire astonishment in perceiving now the utter silence of those divine writings concerning any such second divine person, who was God, or any third divine person, or god, called the holy ghost, or holy spirit. I perceived on the contrary, that throughout, God speaks of himself, by the personal pronoun, I, me; is always addressed by prophets and holy men, in the same way, Thou, thee; and spoken of by the third person singular, He, him: So that if there be any power or use in words to signify any thing, or any credit to be given to the scriptures, God is ONE, one single person, and no more.

I was however restrained in immediately making this conclusion, by some arguments, which I recollected to be used to prove the doctrine of the trinity from the Old Testament, and which formerly had weight with me; but which, I confess, appeared to me now very trifling.

One of them, was; where, at the creation, God said, (d) *Let us make man in our image, after our likeness*. And soon after; (e) *Behold, the man is become as one of us*. From which sayings it is concluded, that the Divine Being addressed himself to some persons upon a rank of equality with him, one of which they suppose was the person, who afterwards became a man.

But, to say nothing more against such an arbitrary construction, and mere supposition; this plural way of speaking is thus naturally accounted for, as many learned trinitarians have acknowledged; viz. that Moses used it for the greater solemnity, to dignify his subject, when about to treat of man's creation, the chief of the works of God. Or, it may be, according to the jewish interpretation, that there is an allusion to the antient

(d) Genesis i. 26.

(e) Gen. iii. 22.

doctrine of God being always surrounded with angelic spirits, to receive his commands and execute his purposes; to whom he now addressed himself.

Another argument, from the books of Moses, for the trinity, also occurred, which indeed now appeared to me only to shew how much men were at a loss for real arguments; and is taken from the plural termination of one of the names of God, Elohim; from which it is contended, that there is a plurality of persons, as it is termed, in God.

This indeed is not perceivable in our English Bible, the translators, and I believe all translators in other countries, having very judiciously put this name of God in the singular number, as was done by the first jewish translators of the hebrew scriptures into greek, betwixt 2 and 300 years before Christ; who certainly understood their own, which was the living language. Not to mention that many singular words in all languages have a plural termination; and that this name, Elohim, being sometimes applied to men, it might as well be inferred, that each man had a plurality of persons in him, as that there was any thing of the kind in God.

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Much weight I had also been taught to lay on some phrases in the books of Moses; for instance, where it is said, the (*f*) LORD rained upon Sodom and Gomorrah brimstone and fire *from the* LORD out of heaven; as if this indicated that there were two LORDS or two Jehovahs; whereas it is only an idiom of the language, in repeating the noun for the pronoun, the LORD from the LORD, instead of the LORD rained from himself; as might be shewn by many examples, which would equally prove that there were two (*g*) Solomons, or two (*b*) Rehoboams, &c. &c.

It has also been fancied, that there was a divine person mentioned in the Old Testament, stiled the angel of God, the angel of the LORD, or of Jehovah; who was either another Jehovah, equal in all perfections; or according to others, a second power, brought forth from God, who ministred to the supreme Father, and was his agent in making and governing the world; and who afterwards became the man Christ Jesus.

(*f*) Gen. xix. 24.

(*g*) 1 Kings viii. 1.

(*b*) 1 Kings xii. 21.

But this has been shewn to be a mistake, from not understanding the language of the scripture concerning the divine appearances, signified by the term, angel of God, angel of the LORD. In the which, God is always represented as appearing, or manifesting himself, by some subordinate angel, agent, or power. But then, the angel or agent of the LORD, was not always a person, or intelligent being, but often things inanimate; *viz.* an articulate voice, a pestilential wind, &c. &c. were called the angel of the Lord.

These arguments however, and every thing of the kind from the Old Testament, in behalf of two Jehovahs, or a plurality of gods, appeared to me now, as they really are, mere subtleties and ingenious contrivances, to extract a doctrine from words, which they were never intended to convey. For all conclusions from these or any of the like words and phrases, of there being more than one God, one divine person, intended by Moses, and the prophets, in their language concerning the deity, were to my understanding, totally overturned, by this single consideration; namely, that Moses and all the sacred writers
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of the Old Testament, who use such language, never drew any such conclusions from it, as christians have done ; did never in any way signify, that they thereby understood, or intended to teach, that there was any plurality of persons in God, strange unintelligible language ! but I observed them constantly, uniformly, invariably, and universally, throughout, to speak of God, as being one single person, as any single man is one person ; and never to intimate, that there was any other god, or divine person, but this one who was acknowledged, adored, and worshiped by them ; and who alone ought to be acknowledged, adored, and worshiped.

These two arguments then from the sacred writings of the Old Testament, which I have produced as striking me so forcibly, and which lye upon the very surface, so that none can miss seeing them, are absolutely decisive upon my mind, that there is but one God, one divine person, who is God, and to be worshiped ; and I shall beg leave to repeat them, that I may be told if there be any flaw in them.

First ; God being spoken of, spoken to, and speaking of himself, in the singular

number, is a proof of there being but one divine person, one God; which no sophistry in the world can split and construe into two, or more persons.

Secondly, Moses, Samuel, David, Solomon, and all the prophets, and holy men recorded in the Old Testament, never appear to have had any knowlege of any second god, to be worshiped, such as christians have found out for them, since their time; nor of a third divine person and god, stiled the holy ghost, or holy spirit; but they ever acknowledged and worshiped one God only, namely, the single person of Jehovah, the maker of all things.

And these two arguments are intelligible to the most ordinary understanding. The unlettered man, the day-labourer and mechanic, is capable of seeing their force as well as the greatest scholar, and may thence satisfy himself, by the authority of Moses and all the old prophets, that he is not mistaken in rejecting the doctrine of three divine persons, three Gods, in opposition to all the subtle windings, by which learned Divines may seek to bewilder him on so plain a subject, from the Old Testament,

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There are therefore no other gods, no other creators, but Jēhovah alone, the God of Abraham, the God of the Israelites, according to the doctrine of Moses and all the prophets. If there be any single, particular texts, or passages of the Old Testament, from which the contrary doctrine is inferred, they will be found to be false readings, or mistranslations, or misinterpreted: for the scripture cannot contradict itself. And I apprehend, that if we were not capable, in any of these ways, to account for one or two particular texts, which may be supposed to speak of Christ as God, although I am assured by writers I consulted, who have considered the matter, that this is not the case in any one instance; yet, on such a supposition, we must be governed by what is found in every page, and is in agreement with the whole tenor of the book, and not by what is found in one or two places only.

Photinus here interposed, partly with a view to give a little respite to Volusian, who was somewhat exhausted with speaking with some warmth and so long together;

PHOTINUS.

PHOTINUS.

If am persuaded, Volufian, fays he, that if you had found leifure to make the inquiry yourfelf, you would have been foon convinced, that there is not one particular paffage in the Old Testament which teaches that there is a fecond divine perfon, or god, who afterwards became the man Chrift Jefus; or a third divine perfon, or god, called the holy fpirit. And with your leave, and that of our friends, I will give you a few fpecimens of thofe that are commonly produced.

One is concerned to have occafion for ever to mention the grofs impofition on the mere Englifh reader, in our tranflation of Ifaiah, ix. 5. in which a *child* who is born is ftiled the *everlafting Father*. Bifhop Lowth threw out this *everlafting Father*, for which there never could be the leaft plea, but retained the language *the mighty God*; which however he ought to have confidered, the common Englifh reader would interpret of Chrift being the fupreme God, when he knew the original was far from fuch meaning. A learned Layman, who very lately hath with great accuracy and judgment given a new tranflation of the whole

whole book, thus renders this passage; "For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government shall be upon his shoulder; and his name shall be called, the messenger of the great design; the father of the age; the prince of peace."

Isaiah liii. 8. Instead of, *Who shall declare his generation?* as if referring to some eternal generation of Christ, as is pretended; we should read; and the men of *his generation who shall be able to describe?*

Jeremiah xxiii. 6. Instead of, This is the name whereby *he shall be called*, the LORD or *Jehovah our righteousness*, as tho' Christ was Jehovah: we should read; This is the name by which *the Lord shall call him, our righteousness*: which is the honest translation of a worthy and learned divine of the church of England, now living.

Zechariah xii. 10. Instead of—*they shall look upon me, whom they have pierced*; as tho' God could be pierced or stabbed, it being God who is speaking: read—*they shall look upon him, whom they have pierced*. This is also the rendring of some eminent dignitaries in the church; as also the following;

Zechariah

Zechariah xiii. 7. Instead of, *Awake, o sword, against my shepherd, and against the man that is my fellow, saith the LORD of hosts*, as if Christ was fellow with the LORD of hosts; read; *Awake, o sword, against my shepherd, and against the man who is near unto me, saith the LORD of hosts.*

Micah v. 2.—whose goings forth have been from of old, *from everlasting*. Almighty God is here the speaker; and it is generally believed by christians, as it was by jews before Christ, that the words are spoken concerning the Christ, the Messiah, as being to be born at Bethlehem, the place specified in the foregoing clause of the passage.

But the words, as Calvin and other interpreters agree, are to be understood, not of Christ as actually going forth from everlasting; but only of him, as destined in the divine mind, or by the Almighty being, before his birth, for some great design. So that this passage is no proof that Christ had any existence at the time, or before he was born of Mary.

But I beg your's and the company's pardon, Volusian, for interrupting the satisfaction,
which

which I believe we have all received, in your natural account of your disquisitions and conclusions, in this your most important search of the Scriptures, and endeavour to arrive at some fixed settlement, who is the Being you are to worship; whether three divine Persons, or one only. And I hope you will gratify us with the continuation of the thread of your inquiry.

VOLUSIAN.

I must be so far honest to you, as to own, says Volusian, that I really look upon myself as the person obliged by your desire to hear the farther process and result of my scriptural researches, as it shews that you so far approve the methods I have taken; and I shall hope to be corrected, if in any thing you shall perceive me to have made any material mistakes. I go on then, where I left off.

NOT having found any second divine person or God, who was afterwards to become man, nor a third divine person, stiled the holy ghost or holy spirit, in the Old Testament,

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I proceeded much agitated to the reading of the New ; which I had always looked upon as more particularly teaching two other persons to be gods, beside the Father, who also were his equals, and equally to be worshiped. And I frankly confess, I was bewildered ; I could not now tell what to think or expect. For it appeared impossible, if the two revelations, that by Moses and the prophets, and the last by Jesus Christ, came from God, that they should flatly contradict each other in an article of the first importance. In this state of mind then, I was not so much astonished and disappointed, as I should otherwise have been, when, on examining for myself into the writings of the first three evangelists and historians of the life of Christ, I could find not the least trace of their looking upon, and considering him as God. They all uniformly agree in describing the holy Jesus, as a human being, of a particular tribe and family among the jews : two of them mention his being born of Mary, by the extraordinary power of God, and the omission of this circumstance by the two other historians, is easily accounted for. They relate that at first, he was like
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all other children, a puny, senseless babe; growing like them in strength and understanding, as he grew in years, and making also gradual improvements in piety and virtue. When he was called forth by God to shew himself to the world, we find him indued with extraordinary gifts and powers, to fit him to act his part as a teacher and saviour come from God, and enable him to give proofs of his divine authority, that men might listen to and obey him. And at the last, having finished the work assigned to him, he willingly gave up his life, for the benefit of mankind, in testimony of the truths he taught, and of his mission from God.

If Matthew mentions among this heavenly teacher's last words, that he commanded to "make disciples of all nations, and baptize them *into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the holy spirit*:" no one, who had not already imbibed such notions elsewhere, would understand him as telling them, in such an indirect manner, at parting with them, what he had never spoken of before, namely, as some will have it, that himself was a second god equal to the Father, and
that

that the holy ghost, or holy spirit, was a third god. But they would surely apprehend his intentions to be, agreeably to his usual meaning elsewhere, in the use of these words, Son, and holy spirit, thereby to signify ; that mankind were to be initiated by baptism into his religion, which came from the supreme *Father* of all ; which himself, his beloved *Son* taught by authority from him ; and which was confirmed by the *holy spirit*, or the gifts of miraculous powers, first imparted to himself, and afterwards to his apostles and followers ; which were so many proofs of their divine mission, and authority.

It was a circumstance that made deep impression on my mind, in reading these three first historians, Matthew, Mark, and Luke ; that they plainly shew by their writings, that they lived without any idea of their lord and master Jesus being any other than one of the human race, most highly favoured and distinguished by Almighty God ; and also that they were desirous, and published their respective histories, with a view, that his followers, and all others in succeeding ages, might by reading them, think thus of him.

How

How would they have been affected with concern, to hear christians familiarly calling, and invoking the holy Jesus, as God equal to the Father; him, whom they introduce rebuking a man, for even insinuating, that himself was any thing above the condition of a creature of limited and imperfect goodness: “Why callest thou me *good*? there is none *good* but one, (g) that is God.

The impressions I received from the attentive perusal of these three former evangelists, contributed to soften the prejudices which I had entertained, that Jesus was the logos, the word, spoken of in the beginning of John’s gospel, and therefore God.

I could not take it into my thoughts, but that all the apostles, and evangelists, must know, who their master Jesus was, whether God or man; and must agree about it.

As to the blessed Jesus being possessed of two natures, a human nature and a divine nature, by one of which he was the most high God, and by the other a mortal creature at the same time: this is a sort of theology to

(g) Matth. xix. 17.

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which

which Christ and his apostles were intire strangers. It fixes an odious duplicity upon our Saviour's character, of which every honest man would be ashamed; that, for instance, when in one place, he says (*b*) "of that day and that hour knoweth no man, no not the angels, which are in heaven, *neither the Son, but the Father;*" he meant only that he was ignorant of it in his human nature, not in his divine. I am ashamed to say, that I had been formerly imposed on by this senseless doctrine of the two natures: otherwise I should have thought it below all notice.

Moreover John, as well as the other evangelists, in his gospel, styles Christ directly a man, a human being, subject to sufferings and death. But God cannot suffer or die. How little have we learned, if we have not learned this? And yet how long have my eyes been shut against so plain a position, that Jesus who died could not be God, nay, must have been a mortal man. For we know not that any other intelligent beings in the universe, have ever been subject to die, but those of our own species.

(*b*) Mark xiii. 32.

Nay,

Nay, after his master Jesus was, by the power and goodness of God, raised to life, John introduces him even then, styling his apostles, *brethren*, i. e. men of the same nature and country with himself; adding moreover, that he had the same God and heavenly Father, in common with them. (i) "Go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father and your Father, and to my God and your God."

St. John therefore, who gives this account, from our Saviour's own mouth, after his resurrection, of his being only one of the human race, could never in the beginning of his gospel, speak of him as having been from all eternity, God, the Word, by whom all things were made: but in language well understood by those to whom he writes, he thereby intended the Word, Wisdom, Power of God, which is God himself, by which all things were made; and which Word, as he goes on to say, became man, and dwelt among us; i. e. dwelt among us in the person of Jesus Christ, to whom it was imparted in an extraordinary degree.

(i) John xx. 17.

To mention only two phrases more, used by this evangelist, by which I had been much imposed on, for want of a little attention. If our Saviour says, (*k*) "I and my Father are one:" he speaks in the same terms of his apostles and followers being (*l*) one with himself, and with God. If he speaks of his (*m*) own coming down from heaven, coming forth from the Father, coming into the world, he himself explains his words at the time, to the attentive reader; that he meant thereby nothing more than his divine mission and authority from God, and that his language was not to be taken literally.

BUT if there be any book of the New Testament, which affected me above others, as proclaiming in every page, that the blessed Jesus was no divine person, no second God or creator, equal to the Father, but only his creature of the human race, highly favoured and beloved; it was the book of the Acts of the Apostles; or rather, the account of the

(*k*) John x. 30. (*l*) John xvii. 21, 22. (*m*) See and compare John vi. 38. i. 6. and viii. 42. xvi. 28.

propagation

propagation of the religion of Jesus, by some few of the apostles and their friends, among jews and gentiles, after their master's resurrection, and being carried up to the heavenly regions.

To allege a few out of many instances.

Peter, in his first public discourse to the jewish people, in his own name and that of the rest of the apostles, speaks of Jesus as being a (*n*) man like all others, distinguished only by extraordinary gifts and powers from God; and after charging them with putting so holy a person to death, tells them that God had vindicated his innocency, by raising him to life in three days, and by *making him both Lord and Christ*. From which, by the way, we learn, that when we call Jesus our Lord, we are to understand him to be only such a Lord, as almighty God hath made and appointed him.

Soon after, the apostles, Peter and John, (*o*) in one and the same discourse, twice stile their master, Jesus, God's servant. And it is observable, that they do this, after his having been taken up into heaven.

(*n*) Acts ii. 22, 23, 24, 36.

(*o*) Acts iii. 13, 36.

We have next all the apostles, in their joint prayer, Acts iv. 24—31. by the mouth of Peter, with great solemnity, invoking God, as the sovereign lord and master, and in the same breath, styling Jesus, twice, his servant.

It is to be noted, that the apostle John joined in this prayer, in twice styling Jesus the servant of God. And this is another proof, that in the beginning of his gospel, nothing could be farther from his thoughts than to speak of Jesus as God, the Word, by whom all things were made.

It is a proof also, that if there be any texts in John's epistles, which speak of any other God but one; or that make Jesus to be God, they must be spurious, or false readings. For it is impossible, that the apostle, or that any person of sense, in his right mind, should so directly contradict himself.

The address of Stephen to Jesus, which I had been taught to consider as being a prayer to him as God; was a single request, offered in peculiar circumstances, when under the (*p*) impressions of a visible appearance or represen-

(*p*) Acts vii. 59, 55, 56.

tation

tation of Jesus before his eyes ; and therefore cannot properly be called a prayer as to God ; and particularly when at the very same time he calls Jesus, *the Son of man*. When the holy martyr kneeled down (*q*) after this, it was in solemn prayer, to the sovereign Lord of all, to forgive his murderers, after the example of his master Jesus in a similar situation.

When our Lord, soon after this, is represented as appearing to Paul, and saying; (*r*) “ I am Jesus whom thou persecutest ;” it was acknowledging himself to be the man, who went by that name upon earth.

We have next the manner, in which Christ was preached to the gentile world. The apostle Peter, in an intercourse which he had by divine direction, with Cornelius, the Roman centurion, and his friends, does not inform them, that Jesus was God ; but a man, (*s*) with extraordinary powers from God.

There are few things that deserve more to be remarked, and remembered, than the manner of St. Paul’s preaching the gospel in

(*q*) Acts vii. 60.

(*r*) Ib. ix. 5.

(*s*) Ib. x. 38.

the Areopagus at Athens: where he informs his audience, that there was but one single person, who was God, the (†) sole creator of all things; and that there would be a day of future account, in which one of mankind, Jesus, whose doctrines he delivered to them, was appointed to be the judge; of which God had given the fullest assurance by raising him from the dead.

This is a most important declaration. It enables us to understand those few passages in St. Paul's epistles, in which he has been supposed to contradict himself in this respect, so as to speak of Jesus Christ as God, or the object of prayer; and may satisfy us, that those passages are not genuine, or are misinterpreted by us.

2. It teaches us likewise, that in those instances, where this apostle ascribes a creation to Jesus Christ, he does not mean the creation of the universe, which he here ascribes to God alone; but a moral and spiritual creation, the reformation of mankind by the gospel; as has been well shewn to be the just explication of his words, by many learned persons.

(†) Acts xvii. 24, 31.

It struck my mind very much in going over some of the preceding facts, that an argument might be formed from them, by which the mere plowman, who consulted his Bible, might confute the ablest divines, who should take upon them to prove from any thing dropt in the epistles of Paul, or of the other apostles, that Jesus Christ was God, and to be worshiped.

For he might say to them “Sirs, I am persuaded that with all your learning, you must be exceedingly mistaken, in pretending that the apostles in their epistles teach Jesus Christ to be God.”

“For the apostle Paul, who wrote so many epistles, could by no means intend to teach any such doctrine in them; because in his speech to the Athenians, he declares, that God, who made the world, was one single person; and that Jesus, who was ordained to be the future judge of the living and dead, was a human creature, most highly honoured by almighty God. You must be mistaken therefore in your interpretations, and your learning misleads you, in making Jesus to be God. For, be assured, St. Paul was an honest man, and
a man

a man of sense, and could not so flatly contradict himself, in saying any thing of the kind of one, whom he himself describes to the learned people of Athens, as a man only.

And so also a person the most unlearned might confute the greatest divines, who should attempt to prove Jesus Christ to be God, from any of the epistles that remain of the other apostles; of James, Peter, Jude, and John: and might say; "Sirs, these apostles joined with the rest in that solemn prayer to God, in which they twice call Jesus, God's servant: therefore you must misapprehend their meaning, or their words must have been wrongly put down, if you would from them prove Jesus to be God. In little things, the apostles might mistake, and vary from themselves; but not in a matter of such vast importance, so as to say in one place, that Jesus was the servant of God, and in another that he was the most high God himself."

AFTER the survey of this prodigious accumulation of evidence, from both the Old and the New Testament, against my former opinions, I declare to you, my friends, I could
scarce

scarce believe my senses, that things were really such as I had found them: but that rather all was a dream.

So plainly did it appear to be laid down in the scriptures throughout, that even a child of any tolerable understanding might easily be taught to see, that God is strictly One, one person; and the blessed Jesus nothing but his favoured creature and servant.

And yet, all the Fathers as they call them, almost from the first, i. e. all the great Divines and christian writers, of all countries, with some few exceptions, whose writings have been suffered to remain; popes, patriarchs, archbishops, bishops, all the councils and synods, the great churches in every country, the greek church, the church of Rome, the church of England, all of them, in all ages, to the present, have held and maintained, and still hold and maintain, that the single person of the Father of the universe is not God by himself alone; but that there are three divine persons, who are each of them gods, and each of them equally to be worshiped, and that Jesus Christ is one of them.

And thus all these great and learned of the world, have been so blind in all ages, and
continue

continue so to this day, and of course all christian people, who are influenced and governed by their example, so as not to have seen, or yet to see, what I have seen and hope to have in some measure demonstrated, to lye upon the very surface, and to be visible, literally speaking, in every page of the Bible, where the name of God is mentioned; *viz.* that there is but one single person, who is God alone, and creator of all things, Jehovah, the supreme Father.

I knew not at first what to make of such amazing defection from the true doctrine of the scripture, in this important point, and of so long duration, nor could I gain any composure of spirit about it; till I considered, that many at first, and all in these latter ages, might, through the force of education, have taken this tritheistic doctrine upon trust; and have been under the common delusion which I was, that it was a mysterious subject, to be settled by learned men, and not to be pryed into with too curious eyes, but believed: and they had not the good fortune to meet with those gentle hints and friendly admonitions, which I have formerly as well as lately received from
you

you, my friends, at different times, although they made little impression to any purpose till now.

If I am in any thing mistaken, I desire some one will in charity shew me my error ; will point out to me, if there be any but one single person, Jehovah, the Father, who is God, and to be worshiped, mentioned either in the Old or New Testament.

But indeed, taking the whole evidence of revelation, from the beginning to the end, it appears to me, from the few particulars I have summed up, such an absolute demonstration of the Divine Unity, as is not to be resisted. And when superstition, prejudice, power and interest, shall lose their hold on men's minds, in this article, all must see this evidence : and I am willing to hope, that the world is coming to that point.

But I feel myself agitated by this total change of my sentiments, with respect to the Being I am to worship, to a degree which I cannot describe ; and many thoughts croud in upon me, which I have not had time to digest, and in which I must hereafter beg your kind assistance.

But still, however wrong, I cannot look upon myself to have been an idolater in the worship, which I have hitherto paid to Jesus Christ. Though a mistaken, I cannot look upon myself to have been a wicked man in what I did, and therefore not under the condemnation of God, as that language implies. However, as you have asserted, that Jesus Christ being a creature, the worship of him is idolatrous, I confess this disturbs me much, and I shall not be at rest till I have an opportunity of hearing you farther upon the subject, if I have not already tired your patience quite out.

The fervour and force of argument, with which Volusian gave this account of the alteration of his opinions, with respect to the object of christian worship, from the mere reading of the scriptures, moved every one present; and they declared themselves interested as much as himself, that the conversation might be renewed at as early a day, and short an interval, as possible.

PHOTINUS

PHOTINUS TO VICTORIN;

Relating the continuance of a conversation, from which Volusian is satisfied, that the worship of Jesus Christ is idolatrous.

SOON after the former conversation, whilst Volusian, with no small impatience, was waiting to have the subject resumed, he was much mortified by the arrival of a large company, who came to pay a visit of several days, and were composed of persons by no means of a speculative turn; who would have taken it ill to have had their amusements interrupted by grave talk about religion, and especially by any the most distant censures upon that which was established in the country; which they held sacred, and not to be touched or altered on any account.

They were however not a little disconcerted in this respect, by a very innocent incidental remark that was made the morning they went away; when, the discourse happening to turn
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upon Sunday-schools, and a very general commendation being given of them, a blunt gentleman (*u*) present said, that he hoped among other good regulations, about which the clergy and gentry in many parishes, took such laudable pains, they would bestow their attention in procuring a correction of some few things in the catechism of the church of England, for the benefit of their young people; which loudly called for it.

But I shall name only one, says he, which is to be met with near the beginning of the catechism; when, after repeating the Apostles' creed, the child being asked, "What dost thou learn by these articles of thy belief?" He is made to answer. "First, I learn to believe in God, the Father, who hath made me and all the world. Secondly, in God the Son, who redeemeth me and all mankind. Thirdly, in God the holy Ghost, who sanctifieth me and all the elect people of God."

(*u*) *****, whom you well know, and whom I shall call Synesius; learned, of a singular turn of mind, a professed admirer of the church, though seldom seen within its walls; but of a life better regulated than that of many who are more frequent in their attendance.

Now

Now this seems plainly to put into the child's mouth, false reasoning, and wrong conclusions, and to make it assert what upon the very face of the thing is not true. For the creed begins with declaring, that there is one God, the Father almighty, and maker of all things; and never says any thing of any *God the Son*, or *God the holy ghost*: but only that Jesus Christ, the only, or beloved son of God, was born of Mary, a jewish woman, and put to death by Pontius Pilate, the Roman governor in Judea: adding afterwards, that there was a holy ghost, or holy spirit to be believed in; whatever was to be understood by it. But there is no intimation given, that these two last named, the *Son* and the *holy ghost*, were each of them gods, as well as God, the Father almighty: which, nevertheless, the poor children are made to declare that they believe to be taught by the creed.

The guests were particularly offended with the rudeness, as it was called, of these remarks. One lady in particular, a great admirer of the composition and close reasoning of the creed of St. Athanasius, observed that the gentleman might have chosen a more proper subject

to descant upon; that there was no occasion for so much exactness in teaching young children; and that if the doctrine of the trinity was not in so many words to be found in the Apostles' creed, it might easily be understood to be comprehended in it, as there were the names of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, and it was a doctrine which all knew was to be found in the scriptures.

There being no reply to be made to such a long string of suppositions without proof, the gentleman beg'd pardon for having given offence inadvertently, and so the matter ended. Soon after the strangers took their leave.

THE THIRD DAY.

VOLUSIAN.

WHEN they were gone, Volusian remarked, how easily we were all imposed upon by taking things, in our early youth, upon trust, as infallibly true, from our parents and teachers, and in consequence adhering to them without examination

examination ever afterwards, and this to such a degree, as not to endure their being called in question by others. This, proceeds he, seems to be the state of mind of the company just gone, and might have been mine, had I not enjoyed the advantage of friends of a more liberal cast, who are for bringing all things to the test of reason and scripture. But from this little ventilation of the matter, for which we are extremely obliged to Synesius, I now see, what I own I never before attended to; that the apostles' creed, so called, the oldest of all the creeds, though not drawn up by the apostles, is perfectly unitarian: which affords a strong proof, that the christians immediately following the apostles, were also perfect unitarians. How does light break in from all parts, when the bandage of superstition is once taken off the eyes, as from mine lately! In such a state, the progress from error to truth is most rapid; of which I have had happy experience, whose opinions in so short a space have undergone such a total change, that from having looked upon the holy Jesus all my life as the supreme God, I am convinced by evidence, which must in time convince all the world, that he was

only a mortal being, most highly favoured and beloved of God.

But although about this I am now intirely satisfied, I can by no means allow, as I before remarked, that I was an idolater in worshipping Jesus Christ in the days of my ignorance; or that all my friends and acquaintance, who still worship him, are idolaters; or my ancestors, and the whole Christian world now, and for ages past. For idolatry is represented in the sacred writings as a heinous sin, for which men are liable to the severe displeasure of Almighty God; an idea which I cannot entertain of any, who are sincere, however erroneous, in their worship of Jesus Christ. If I am mistaken in this matter, I beg to be set right.

PHOTINUS.

I do not wonder, Volusian, replied Photinus, that your fair and honest mind should reject such an unworthy thought, concerning the righteous, moral governor of the world, as that he should condemn his frail offspring of mankind, and subject them to the most lasting sufferings, for opinions, which how-
ever

ever wrong they might be, were held by them very innocently ; often the effect of early prejudice, hardly ever to be overcome ; or owing to a superstitious awe and dread of inquiry into certain subjects, or the want of opportunity of better information : of which class were you yourself, and thousands and ten thousands now, and in former ages, who have joined in the idolatrous worship, which has prevailed in the christian church, in all countries.

But the idolatry, against which the judgments of God were denounced in the sacred writings, was very different from that which has obtained among christians. We find from Moses, that the heathen worship of their false gods in his time, countenanced and encouraged the grossest lewdness, sodomy, bestiality, &c. nay, that these made a part of it. And in later times, among the polite greeks and romans, the most horrid enormities, and unnatural practices, were boasted of, as sanctified by the examples of the deities they worshiped. So that the idolatry of the heathens was threatened with such severe punishment of old, not as a speculative error, but because it was attended with the most shocking vice and immorality.

But nothing of this kind can be charged upon the idolatrous worship of christians ; that it directly encourages vice and wickedness. And although the almighty and infinite Being is dishonoured and degraded by his creatures being put on a rank and in competition with him, and made the objects of prayer and divine worship ; and much detriment to the morals of many indirectly results from it, which are things greatly to be lamented : still those who act thus under a state of invincible ignorance, must be acknowledged guiltless. So that you may make yourself easy, Volusian, as to your former practice in this respect, though you can by no means be cleared from the imputation of idolatry in it.

VOLUSIAN.

You have given me some satisfaction, replies Volusian, in the mitigated account of the idolatry, with which, without scruple, you charge the christians' worship of Jesus Christ. But you seem to have forgotten, that you have not yet proved your accusation, nor shewn wherein their idolatry lies.

PHOTINUS.

PHOTINUS.

I beg your pardon, says Photinus, and thank you for reminding me of my fault, and of what I ought myself to have attended to. I shall therefore make the attempt to verify my assertion; and as I hold it to be a matter of great moment, I hope I shall express myself so as to be intelligible, not only to you, but to all the christian world, if it could hear me.

Idolatry then I call the worship of false gods, the paying of divine honours to a creature.

And such idolatry is forbidden by the light of nature. For reason teaches the diligent searcher into the origin of himself and the universe around him, that every thing is the workmanship of one wise, benevolent, all-governing mind, one God, one gracious Power, who gives all things to all, and is therefore to be acknowledged, adored, and thanked by all.

And this natural light, our reason, which is a ray of the divine intelligence, and given by our maker, prohibits the worship of any other but him; because to pay the like worship to any other being, would be to deny

that we receive every thing from him, and depend upon him for every thing; and also because it is a most shameful dishonouring of God, to rank his creatures on the same line with him: for all beings besides are his creatures. It is also not only absurd, to pray to beings, that cannot hear or help us; but must likewise fill the mind with darkness and superstition. For inferior beings, nearer our own level, will soon be supposed pleased with what pleases our own passions and fancies, outward pomp and ceremony, fine speeches and costly offerings; and in these religion will be chiefly placed: whilst God, infinite in holiness and all goodness, who has nothing that is imperfect in common with his creatures, none of their wants and passions, will always be approached by them with serious recollection and awe, and as one, who is only to be pleased with virtue, and inward rectitude and goodness in his worshippers.

But as the greater part are not disposed, nor have leisure, thus to trace out the creator in his works, and to discover what is the true worship they are to render to him; it pleased the Divine Being, from the beginning, in extraordinary

ordinary ways, to make himself and his perfections known to mankind; and in process of time to deliver in writing to one nation, chosen from the rest, but in some respects for the benefit of all, a code of laws; the first of which, as of most importance, and what evidently concerns every rational being to know, is that which relates to the divine unity, and is expressed in such terms as are plain to every understanding; God himself, in person, if we may so speak, condescending to declare to the people of Israel, (w) "I am Jehovah thy God, who brought thee forth out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. Thou shalt have none other gods but me."

By this commandment, all beings and persons whatsoever, are excluded from being God, and from being worshiped as God, but the single person who speaks; and who, as he goes on to say, made heaven and earth, &c. viz. was the creator of all things.

Should any christians object that this command related only to the israelites, to whom

(w) Exodus xx. 2, 3.

it was delivered ; it may be observed, that our Saviour himself, who was one of the jewish nation, and most sacredly observed himself, and inculcated on others, the commandments of God ; in one place, being asked (x) “ which is the first commandment of all ? Jesus answered the man, The first of all the commandments is ; Hear, o Israel, The LORD our God is one LORD ;” referring to the authority of Moses, and replying in some words of (y) his.

As then there has never been a solemn, formal abrogation of this first commandment of God, declaring himself to be God alone, and alone to be worshiped ; nor any authoritative declaration from God at the same time, that there were two other new divine persons, two new gods, upon an equality with himself, who were to be admitted, and worshiped : we must therefore of necessity adhere, to and abide by the unrepealed divine command, that God is one single person, God by himself alone, and alone to be worshiped ; especially as Jesus himself has ratified this command of Moses,

(x) Mark xii. 28, 29.

(y) Deut. vi. 4.

As therefore you are persuaded, that the blessed Jesus is a creature of God, who received his being and all his powers from God, it must be a direct violation of the first commandment of God, and nothing less than idolatry in you, to call him god, and to worship him, if the testimony of God, of Moses, and of Jesus Christ himself, be of any value with you.

Here Volusian appeared to be much moved; and after pausing some short space, was going to speak, the eyes of the company being fixed upon him; when Synesius, who seemed willing to take upon him the part of a moderator, starting up with a sort of apology, thus began,

SYNESIUS.

I am sorry to break in upon you, my friends, in the midst of so interesting an inquiry, and when all of us seem desirous to know Volusian's determinations upon the matter. But a little respite may do him no harm, as his nature is ardent; and sometimes a more indifferent spectator may see what escapes an actor, who is more immediately and deeply engaged in the scene,

- Permit

Permit me then to remark, Photinus, that if this definition of yours of idolatry be allowed, and I do not see how it can be controverted, it will not prove, that the members of the church of England are idolaters in their worship of Jesus Christ. For they themselves think the contrary; and are persuaded, that in worshipping both Jesus Christ and the holy ghost, together with the Father, they worship One God only, though you charge them with worshipping three. And surely persons ought to be judged by their own intentions, and not by the construction that others put upon their actions. To you they may appear idolaters; to themselves they are by no means such.

PHOTINUS.

I am really obliged to you myself, says Photinus, for throwing out such an objection, which to many will seem to be of weight, and certainly deserves to be considered. But you will allow me to say, that I do not think you have sufficiently attended to what you advance on this point, nor to the wrong conclusions, to which such a way of arguing will lead
you :

you : which will shew that it cannot be admitted. For

If men's own thoughts concerning themselves will exculpate them in this matter, it will follow that there never was such a thing as an idolater in the world. For the worshipers of the virgin Mary will clear themselves from the imputation of idolatry in praying to this dead woman, and to other dead persons called saints, because they think them to be alive, and are also persuaded that they who worship them, have the allowance of God himself to address them in prayer, as mediators, and intercessors with him for them.

Then also might the worshipers of Baal have told the prophet Elijah, that he accused them falsely of being idolaters : because whatever he thought, they were persuaded, that Baal was a god, and heard their prayers.

No. Depend upon it, if Jesus Christ be a creature, of which Volusian is perfectly convinced, the worship of him is as much and equally idolatrous, as the worship of his mother Mary.

Our thoughts, imaginations, persuasions, convictions, concerning our actions, cannot
alter

alter their nature ; cannot make that right which in itself is wrong, though they will excuse us in doing it, in proportion to the degree of darkness and insuperable ignorance, under which we labour. Religious worship of, prayer to, a creature, is certainly idolatry, unless any one can produce an express command from God to authorize it. But that is another consideration of the matter, and quite beside our present purpose.

VOLUSIAN.

Volusian listened with great attention to this conversation between Synesius and Photinus ; and immediately after, taking up the subject under apparent anxiety of mind, thus began ;

I now fully perceive, that by this declaration of the Almighty Being to the israelites, and prohibition of the worship of any other being or person but himself, not only, what indeed I always thought, the heathen worship of the heavenly bodies, *i. e.* the natural deities ; and of the artificial gods, dead men and women, Jupiter, Juno, Venus, Mercury, &c. is condemned ; and the similar worship among
christians,

christians, of the virgin Mary, and other dead persons : But, as I am persuaded, that the blessed Jesus was a human being, as much as his mother Mary, though invested with extraordinary divine gifts and powers, the truth obliges me to confess, that the worship of the Son is equally idolatrous with that of the mother. I cannot defend the worship of the one, any more than of the other. Nor could I do it, if instead of being a man, Jesus had been the highest archangel, and first in the order of time and dignity, next to the almighty Being. For still he would have been a creature, and at an infinite distance from HIM that made him, and no object of religious worship, unless he had been so appointed.

I am also convinced, that no plea of ignorance, or good intention, will excuse the worshipers of Jesus Christ from being ranked as idolaters, which will not also exculpate the worshipers of the virgin Mary, and of the heathen gods.

Truth then forces me to confess, that the worship paid to Jesus Christ, or to any other person but God himself, is idolatry ; as surely as there was ever any such thing as idolatry in the world.

I cannot

I cannot however describe to you how much this avowal costs me, and what pain it gives me to think as I am constrained to do, of myself, and of all around me. For according to my present view of things, I behold myself, my relations, friends, and acquaintance, to say nothing of others *ad infinitum*, involved in idolatry, by worshiping him as the supreme God, who is not above the condition of a creature.

The whole company was much struck with the manner in which Volusian spoke his feelings and deep concern, upon his new discovery of the deplorable state of the christian world, and their darkness with respect to the true object of divine worship.

PHOTINUS.

When Photinus, addressing himself to him, said; I am not surprized, Volusian, at the great emotion with which you express yourself, on the prospect, that, on the sudden as it were, opens itself to you. A pious, feeling mind cannot be indifferent in seeing his fellow-creatures enveloped in superstition, and ignorance

ignorance of the God that made them, especially such as are endeared to us by particular ties of affection and friendship.

But then, we must not suffer ourselves to be too much disquieted at their being involved in such unhappy errors, even if it be out of our power to remedy them; because they may be very innocent in the midst of them.

It will be well for you always to remember the distinction betwixt heathen and christian idolatry, which was just now noted to you. The former is that alone which is mentioned in scripture, and is so severely condemned, because it directly led to and licensed vicious and immoral practices. Whereas the idolatry of christians in worshiping Jesus, the founder of their religion, as the supreme God, a corruption brought in first by learned heathen converts, although it has been and is productive of numberless evil consequences, does not directly lead to any thing wicked.

And this idolatry of christians now, is an error of their education, a wrong bias of the understanding, not of the heart, and will not be imputed to those who enjoy not the means of correcting it.

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You should therefore accustom yourself to look upon the idolatry of your family, friends, and acquaintance, as upon any other great errors concerning God, and his righteous administration, with pity and concern; and where it is not in your power to rectify them, by no means to think they will thereby be prevented obtaining the favour of God and their share of future bliss, if their lives have been virtuous, and they have sincerely followed their convictions, and the light they have received.

But how far those are acceptable to God, and innocent, who believing Jesus Christ to be a creature, do nevertheless customarily join with others in the worship of him as the supreme God, is another, and a very serious question.

I think, however, my friend, that as you and many others are under such full convictions, that the worship of Jesus Christ is idolatrous, as it truly is, there is no reason, why you should be at all reserved, on proper occasions, in calling it such. Perpetual silence about it would seem to be owing to an illaudable fear, and delicacy, like what the poet alludes to;

“Nor mention hell to ears polite.”

After so many ages that christians have slept in this idolatry, the holding of it up to view as such in reality, appears to be the only way left of awakening them out of it; and of keeping others from falling into the same unhappy slumber, and continuing in it. In the mean time, by means of such polytheism almost universally prevailing, undeserved disgrace and discredit is brought upon the christian name, as countenancing the worship of three gods, of whom one had been a dead man, which the heathens in scorn upbraided us with very early. And thus innumerable multitudes are continually turned aside from the gospel, chusing rather to follow nature's light; or else losing themselves in the mazes of a dreary Pyrrhonism.

The most orthodox in our own country, have had no scruple of terming the worship of Christ idolatrous, if he be a creature. The famous Dr. Waterland, in one place says; (y)
 ‘ All *creatures* whatsoever are effectually precluded from receiving any religious homage and adoration, of any kind or degree; and to worship Christ, considered as a *creature*,

(y) Waterland. Def. p. 231, 252.

‘ is idolatry.’ An eminent dissenter, on a public occasion, declares ; (z) ‘ Prayer is one of the principal branches of *religious worship*, which is the peculiar prerogative of the great God : if men therefore make the object of it a creature, then are they guilty of downright idolatry.’ And this very year, a learned man of the church of England, thus pronounces ; (a) ‘ If this doctrine of the Trinity be false, then nine tenths of the christians, throughout every age and in every country, have been guilty of idolatry ;—of an idolatry, more gross than that of the Papists at present, because not merely the worship of saints, and of angels, in subordination to God ; but the worship of a creature along *with* the creator, placing him equally with God upon the throne of the universe, giving God a partner in his empire, and so deposing God from half his sovereignty.’

This last author however, is far from allowing nine tenths of the christians, throughout

(z) Dr. Hughes's Sermons at Salters-Hall, Vol. II. p. 8.

(a) The origin of Arianism disclosed, p. 4, 5. by the Rev. Mr. Whitaker.

every age and in every country, to have been guilty of such idolatry. But what he puts only hypothetically, is indeed a melancholy truth; that there has been, and perhaps is, such a large proportion of idolaters among christians throughout the world; since for fifteen centuries past at least, to the present day, the christian world (with some exceptions, more or less, in every age) instead of worshipping the supreme Father and only true God, whom the blessed Jesus worshiped, and taught all to worship, have together and equally with HIM, worshiped Jesus himself, and another divine person of their own invention; but this last, called the holy ghost, or holy spirit, begins now to be given up by not a few; to say nothing of the idolatrous worship of saints, or dead men and women, without end.

But we have now a prospect of better days of light, and of the knowlege of God, and of his true worship, from various causes, and particularly from the happy disposition in the nation, to put it in the power of all our fellow-creatures and countrymen, in the very lowest ranks, to read the scriptures for themselves. And no capital error, of heathen or christian growth, can long stand before the bible.

SYNESIUS.

Well, gentlemen, here pleasantly interposed Synesius; I have sat more patiently than I thought I ever could have done, to hear this charge made out against us all, of being idolaters; and not only us of the church of England, but against all the great churches in the world, and of course the bulk of professing christians in them. We are obliged to Photinus, however, for the sweet which he has mixed with his bitter potion, by telling us, that our idolatry, so long as it is a mere error, and we have not the opportunity of knowing better, will not of itself unfit us for heaven's bliss.

But what is next to be done; for I am apprehensive, Volusian will not rest here.

VOLUSIAN.

You rightly judge of me, replies Volusian; I cannot remain as I am. But I should be sorry to trouble you or the rest of my friends, on the subject any longer at present. It has been growing too serious and interesting of some time, not to call for a little respite and relief, to you, my friends, at least. One thing, however, I think

I think myself bound in all fairness to own, before we part.

I begin to be afraid, that my reluctance to allow the worship of Jesus Christ to be called idolatrous, after I was convinced from scripture, that he was merely a creature of God, had too much of worldly prudence and caution in it; though not distinctly perceived by myself.

I seem to have been withheld by a secret thought and apprehension of not being able to join any longer in the public established worship, with my relations and friends, as I had been accustomed all my life, but being obliged intirely to withdraw from it. This certainly now appears to be the unavoidable consequence of looking upon the service of the church as idolatrous; and opens to me a prospect full of difficulties and embarrassment.

But let us walk out, and enjoy the sun's reviving beams, which will tend to dispel uneasy thoughts, and inspire with pleasant and chearing ideas.

PHOTINUS TO VICTORIN;

Reporting the sequel of a conversation, from which Volusian perceives, that he cannot by any plea reconcile himself to frequent the worship of the church of England, whilst he looks upon it to be idolatrous.

THE foregoing day's conversation had left not only Volusian, but others of the company, in solicitude and suspense, about a matter, in which the present peace of their minds was much concerned. After the interval of a few days, when they were all collected together as usual, and amusing themselves in the library, according to their different tastes, Volusian, after some little preface, took an opportunity of saying;

THE FOURTH DAY.

VOLUSIAN.

I HOPE I shall be excused in being importunate with you, my friends, so soon to resume

fume the very grave subject, which has lately engaged your attention. But really it has lain upon my mind so much, that I have not been able to turn myself to any thing else ; nor shall I be at rest till I come to a satisfactory decision upon it. You will easily recollect, that the inquiry was, how a person should act, as in my case, upon discovering, that the established worship of the country, in which he was bred, and to which he had been accustomed, was, in his apprehension, idolatrous : whether he should refrain intirely from such worship, or what other method he should adopt.

Upon this Synesius immediately rose up, and told them, that the subject had occupied much of his thoughts, since they last discoursed upon it, and he hoped that he had fallen upon an expedient that would satisfy them all.

SYNESIUS.

INDEED, my good friends, continues he, I would not have you perplex yourselves any more about the *public* worship of the Almighty Being ; which it would be better to abandon intirely.

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All right worship is in the heart within. There the Great God can alone be properly revered and adored. True piety is a personal thing, with which others have nothing to do. It loses its value intirely, when exercised with a view to others : it is diminished by being known to them. It takes its rise in the heart, from a deep-felt sense of the Divine Being, of his constant presence with, and goodness to us ; prompting us to offer him our unceasing thanks, and humbly to desire of him help and direction to avoid the paths of evil, and follow virtue, that we may secure his protection and favour : all which is private, and concerns the individual only.

The moment you mix together with others in the worship of God, you are in danger of being misled by a thousand fancies, and idle superstitious forms and practices ; and the meritorious repetition of certain words, like so many charms, which have been made a substitute for real holiness and virtue. Whereas no such corruptions can take place, if a man has to do only with God and his own heart, in private.

PHOTINUS,

PHOTINUS.

WHILEST the company were pausing, and quite surprized at this unexpected censure and condemnation of the public worship of the creator, Photinus, addressing himself to Synesius; Your observations, says he, Synesius, on the seat of true piety, and its nature, shew that you entertain a very just sense of it: but surely your view of the subject must have been very contracted, not to see, that the worship of God in public, is so far from being detrimental to genuine devotion, that it tends to excite and promote it, in various ways; particularly from the affecting situation of ourselves and fellow-creatures, before our common creator and heavenly parent, in which it places us.

But it is very strange, that a most weighty and powerful consideration and argument should have escaped you, which overturns all your conclusions; namely, that the public worship of God is in itself a duty of rational, social beings, independent of all external command. For wherever a God is recognized, a first cause, and author of all things, a common universal parent, preserver and benefactor,

on

on whose bounty all equally depend, every moment, for life and every thing, there it is natural for creatures to unite sometimes in praises and thanksgivings to their common protector, to keep up a sense of his constant goodness, and of their obligations and common relation to him: And this has been, more or less, the sentiment and uniform practice of all mankind, who have been in any degree cultivated, in all ages.

Were all men of themselves disposed to piety and virtue, there might be more to say, Synesius, for the solitary, inward devotion of the heart, which you alone recommend. But this is very far from being the fact. Not only those countless multitudes of our species, who are engaged from morning to night in urgent labours for the support of life; and those others, not few in number, who being exempt from the necessity of bodily toil, have their minds far more dissipated and vacant of all good; have great need of being reminded of and put upon acknowledging the Being that made them: but the learned and the philosopher have occasion also for the helps and admonitions to the thought and reverence of
God,

God, which are furnished by a frequent periodical call to his public worship.

By this we are all happily drawn away from a too eager pursuit of worldly things, and awakened to attend to that kind invisible Being, whose goodness surrounds us continually, and to serious recollection how we may render ourselves acceptable to him. And it has been remarked, that they who are not accustomed thus to worship God in public, are seldom found to think of him in private, or to render him any homage at all.

God is therefore publicly to be worshiped : to declare to the world our reverence, esteem, and gratitude most due to him ; to keep up the knowledge of him in ourselves and others, and to cherish in our breasts that attention to him, which is necessary for our present right conduct and comfort, and to qualify us for his favour hereafter.

If you neglect this duty, you go out of the world, without bearing your proper testimony to him who made it, and placed you in it ; you omit and lose an opportunity of thereby benefiting your fellow-creatures by your example, in a matter of the utmost consequence
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to them; an opportunity of serving them, for the omission of which you may have cause of most lasting regret in a future world.

Forgive me saying, that the public worship of the benevolent author of our beings, and giver of all good, is a thing so reasonable and self-evident, so satisfactory, and beneficial in so many views, that one knows not how to argue with one that does not acknowledge it. I do not know but it is as natural for social intelligent beings, at proper seasons, to seek to unite with each other in prayer and giving thanks to the common creator, as to worship him alone in private. It is on these accounts perhaps, that we find no particular injunctions concerning it in the earliest times, in our sacred books; it being presumed to be a dictate of reason, God's natural light given to all, and which all would attend to according to their abilities and opportunities.

When in process of time, one nation was to be separated from the rest, and put under a peculiar divine protection, we find a public worship of the creator appointed by an express divine command, and a particular day set apart for it every week. But Moses, and the following historians, and prophets, did not think

think it necessary to give any accounts, except on special occasions, of their observance of this divine command, or of their public devotions on their sabbaths.

If any should object, that our Saviour never gave any special command concerning public worship, and that this implied, that it was not needful to be attended to by his followers; it should be considered, that it would have been a thing quite superfluous for him to have made any injunctions concerning it, when he found his countrymen remarkably punctual and exact in their observance of the divine command given them by Moses, in this respect; to which he himself also very regularly conformed.

With regard to their synagogue worship, which we are told he never failed to attend every sabbath, although we have no particular description how it was carried on at that time, there is ground to conclude that public prayer made a part of it, as well as the reading and expounding of the scriptures. This we may even gather from the narrative that Justin Martyr gives of the christians' method of worship, on the weekly day set apart for it in

in his time, so near that of the apostles; which was in all probability the very method used by them, and copied from that of the jewish synagogue; and which is not very different from that which is at present used in the church of England.

Indeed, the holy Jesus appears to have omitted no opportunity of shewing his approbation of the public social worship of God; and his institution of his supper, as a religious ordinance, is an exprefs appointment for it, to those who are persuaded, that it was intended to be of perpetual use to his followers.

The practice also of his apostles gives all the countenance that could be expected, to the public social worship of christians, in the short history, which we have of them, in the Acts, and in their epistles. St. Paul very particularly informs us, that public prayer made a part of their worship in their religious assemblies, in (a)

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(a) 1 Cor. xiv. 15, 16, 17. *What is it then? I will pray with the spirit, I will pray with the understanding also: I will sing with the spirit, and I will sing with the understanding also. Else when thou shalt bless with the spirit, how shall he that occupieth the room of the unlearned, say Amen at thy giving of thanks, seeing he understandeth not what thou sayest?*

one place, where he gives directions to the christians of Corinth, concerning their management of the gifts of extraordinary powers, which the Almighty bestowed upon them in that first age, that of prayer, in particular, to enable them, ignorant and inexperienced as they were, to carry on with effect their public worship, and the instruction of one another in the truths of the gospel. There are few facts, I confess, that seem to be better established, than that it was the mind of Christ, that his followers should unite in social religious worship. And we are not, Synesius, to be diverted from so important a duty, by the abuses made of it, but endeavour to correct those abuses.

sayest? For thou verily givest thanks well, but the other is not edified. Which may be thus expressed in different words, "The sum then is this. All public prayers, preaching, and divine hymns, composed by inspiration, ought to be performed in a language known, or interpreted to the congregation: Because otherwise, whatever petitions or thanksgivings any inspired man may offer up to God, the people that know nothing of the language he speaks in, can never join with him in them. The man may pray very well as to himself; but the auditory is nothing the better for such prayers." Pyle.

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SYNESIUS.

SYNESIUS.

I FRANKLY own, replied Synesius, that you have brought together more evidence and authority, for it being the will of the Divine Being, that mankind should assemble together for his public worship, both from nature's light and revelation, than I had any notion of. And I willingly concede to you, however remiss my own practice has been, that it highly becomes us to join our fellow-creatures in such acts of homage and adoration of our common creator, as bespeak our sense of his divine perfections, and thankfulness for his continual goodness to us, thereby to fortify these just and right sentiments towards him in ourselves, and to excite and strengthen them in others. But then, you will allow me to say, that this duty may be fulfilled, where these things are understood and declared in *general* terms, though you may not always approve of the particular manner of expression, or of all the modes of address to the deity which are used. You may satisfy yourself in uniting with such worshipers, out of the general principle of doing homage to the creator, and encouraging the same disposition in

in others. And I conceive, that it is on these principles, and with these views, that you may make yourself quite easy, Volufian, in continuing a member of the church of England, and joining with your friends in her worship, even if it were more exceptionable and obnoxious than you deem it to be.

Perfection, added Synefius, is not to be expected in any thing of man's composition. Where a public establishment of religion promotes piety and a good life, we should not be too nice in criticising particular parts and expressions. If there be any thing, which you cannot conscientiously join in and repeat, you have only to adopt what you like, and pass over the rest, leaving it to those who are edified by it. For you are sensible, that they who approve the whole, sincerely intend to worship God as well as you, though the sentiments and expressions, which are accommodated to their apprehensions, are not wholly approved by you.

PHOTINUS.

THERE is a great appearance of candour in your remarks, replied Photinus immediately ;

but we should take care that our desire to think well of others, and to have them think well of us, does not lead us to undue compliances in religion, and beyond our own sense of things. In lesser matters, wherein we differ, which have no immoral consequences, it would be peevish and hypercritical, to refuse to unite with others in their public devotions.

But with respect to the object of worship, there seems to be no latitude. I cannot better express my sense of the matter, than in the words of a dignitary of the church, who for his valuable writings and excellent character, merits the highest dignities in it.

“Indeed,” says my author, as I well remember the few strong words he uses upon the occasion; “where (*b*) one man thinks it his duty constantly to worship a Being, whom another cannot, with the assent of his conscience, permit himself to worship at all, there seems to be no place for comprehension, or any expedient left but a quiet secession. All other differences may be compromised by silence.”

(*b*) Paley's Principles of moral and political philosophy, Vol. II. p. 66, 67.

Nothing

Nothing can be more plain and express than the command of the Almighty, as we all seemed to agree the other day, upon this point: "Thou shalt have none other gods but me." It is difficult to conceive how they who respect this command, can allow themselves to worship any other than the single person of Jehovah, the maker of heaven and earth, who speaks and gives it. And the same remark may be made on that declaration of our Saviour himself, where, citing some other words of Moses, he says; "Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve." After such a declaration, with what face can any one, who pays any regard to the words of Christ, worship him as God? And it deserves the serious consideration of many christians, whether, to accord with their practice, as an eminent and grave writer remarks, instead of, "Thou shalt have no other gods but me;" the first commandment should not have been, "Thou shalt have no other gods but us three, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost."

SYNESIUS.

HERE Synesius called out to Photinus; I am afraid, my friend, I cannot in return compliment you upon your candour: for it is too plain that your aim is to depreciate our excellent liturgy, and represent those who give a preference to it, as persons void of common sense. But your censures are hasty and undigested. What, if in one or two instances, prayer be addressed to Jesus Christ as God, every one must see, that the general turn of the prayers is to God, the Father, through the one mediator, Jesus Christ: and according to all fair and equitable interpretation, the few exceptions are to be construed and explained by the constant tenor of the worship.

PHOTINUS.

To this Photinus replied; I hope, my friend, that I am far from casting any censure on those who intirely approve, in all things, the liturgy of the established church. May that ease and freedom which they enjoy in worshipping God according to their consciences, be continued to them undisturbed!

But

But then, let others, who are struck with the wrongness of that worship, as being unscriptural and idolatrous, enjoy also their liberty in declaring their opinions, and in warning their friends to keep out of such great errors.

It would be well, Synesius, if it could be as truly said, as I doubt not it is sincerely intended by you, that there are only one or two places in the church-liturgy, where any other God, but the supreme Father, is addressed in prayer. You must certainly have refrained too long from the public worship, as you confess of your own accord, or you could not have made this remark.

I esteem the liturgy of the church of England a most excellent form of public prayer, uniting a sublime and affecting simplicity with the true spirit of devotion. And I even look upon that part of it, called the litany, in its frame and design, as constituting a beautiful variety in this worship. But then, in this litany, which is ordered to be read every Wednesday, and Friday, and every Sunday morning throughout the year, there is such a variety of beings addressed throughout, so utterly inconsistent with, and contradictory

to, the first commandment of Almighty God, that I do not see how the art of man can prove it not to be a breach and violation of that commandment; and every one must judge for himself, whether this be not idolatry.

In the first invocation, how simple is the whole! how right and proper! "O God, the Father of heaven, have mercy upon us, miserable sinners."

But then, where do you find in the scriptures any two other gods, put upon a level with the one supreme, as in that which immediately follows?

"O God the Son, redeemer of the world, have mercy upon us, miserable sinners."

"O God the holy ghost, proceeding from the Father and the Son, have mercy upon us, miserable sinners."

Then again, all the three divine persons are invoked together, and are called by one name, as if calling them so, made them one God.

"O holy, blessed, and glorious Trinity, three persons and one God, have mercy upon us, miserable sinners."

Next follows, what is still more disgusting to the rational and pious mind, that attends

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to the words of Moses, or the directions of the blessed Jesus himself, concerning the object of divine worship. For that meek and humble Saviour, who was so far from claiming any honour from men, much less divine honours, is himself addressed, throughout the remainder of the litany, as the supreme God ; and strange to say ; at the very entrance, you are put upon telling the God you worship, that he was born, that he was circumcised as a jew, that he sweated blood, and that he died. Custom only, from early youth, could reconcile any to use such gross degrading language, to say nothing more, to the being they adore, as the supreme God.

Now contrast this complex, strange worship, with that which the holy Jesus used himself, and enjoined us to use. When ye pray, say ; Our Father, which art in heaven, hallowed be thy name ; thy reign come, as Dr. Campbell has well rendred it ; thy will be done on earth as in heaven, &c.

The like simplicity of address is observable in the few instances of his own prayers, which have been preserved. “ I thank thee, o Father, says he in one place, Lord of heaven
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and earth, that thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes. Even so, Father; for so it seemed good in thy sight."

As the subject is so important, I hope, I shall be excused, my friends, in laying before you an argument against the worship of Christ, furnished by some words of his own, which I have not observed to have been insisted upon by any one; and which, if I mistake not, will be of use to confute some pretences for making him to be God, and worshiping him, that impose upon the unlearned, and have more weight than they ought to have with many worthy persons.

They are almost the very last words of his, which are recorded; when, after commissioning his disciples to go and carry the gospel to all nations, he adds; "teaching them to observe all things, whatsoever I have commanded you."

If then, to apply this to our present case, I want to be resolved on this great point, who is the God I am to worship, and to whom I am to offer my prayers; I am to examine what
account

account the evangelists and apostles give of the matter, and of the directions of their great master concerning it. Do they tell us that Jesus at any time gave orders for any new god to be worshiped, himself or the holy ghost, different from what the jews had been accustomed to worship before? No such thing can be found, nor is even pretended; but inferences have been made, and conclusions drawn, from certain words uttered by Christ, or by his apostles concerning him, that he was God, and to be worshiped; and so concerning the holy ghost, or holy spirit being equally God, and to be worshiped. As if so momentous a point, which regards the very Being we are to worship, and the introduction of two new gods, additional to Jehovah, the supreme Father, were a matter to be left to doubtful and precarious inferences, and not made the subject of an express and positive command, which could not be misunderstood by the meanest capacity; and which the directions of Christ here authorize us to expect.

To apply this in another case,

The early fathers, or first christian writers, are supposed by some to have taught that Jesus
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was God, and to be worshiped; or, that they spoke of him, in such terms, as implied his deity and worship.

If we grant this, which however may be justly questioned, and is denied, with respect to the very earliest of these fathers; are we to go to them to learn who Christ was; to men, who notoriously from the very first corrupted the gospel with heathen mixtures? No: our Saviour here tells us, that we are to be governed only by what he himself taught, and commanded. And his apostles mention no such command being delivered by their master, of considering him as God, and worshipping him; but the contrary.

To give one more instance of the usefulness of our divine master's directions in this respect. Great stress is laid upon the examination of some christians before Pliny the younger, the heathen governor of Bithynia, who made confession before him; "that they were (c) wont to meet together before day, and sing hymns to Christ, as to a God."

(c) —quod essent soliti stato die ante lucem convenire, carmenque Christo quasi deo dicere secum invicem.

Plin. Ep. p. 724.

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This might mean only the singing hymns in honour of Christ, which Pliny might take, according to his heathen notions, to be the considering of him as a God, like the human gods that he himself worshiped.

But understand it as you will; can this be an authority for worshipping Christ as God, when the apostles of Christ are not only silent about any such command being given by him; but teach, that the Father only is God, and to be worshiped?

I must beg your indulgence in suggesting another thought, which occurs to me on this matter, proceeds Photinus, as it may well put us all upon better considering the grounds of our devotional practice, than we are wont to do.

Should our Lord, at the last day, enter into any remonstrance with those who deified and worshiped him in their life-time, it might perhaps be in some such form as this: "Mistaken men, how came ye to take me to be God, and to worship, and pray to me? Had this been right in any manner whatsoever, assuredly I should have told it you directly,
and

and not have left a thing of such infinite consequence in the least uncertainty. My apostles, who were best acquainted with me, and with what I taught, have never recorded, that I declared myself God; but that I always spoke of myself as a creature of God, his beloved child and servant.

“What if I said, in one place, that all men should honour me as they honoured the Father? I in the very same breath spoke of myself as sent by him, and therefore could claim no other honour but the respect and obedience due to a messenger of God.

“If I said; all power is given unto me in heaven and earth? By saying it was given, I shewed from whom I was to receive it, and upon whom I was to depend for it; and therefore was far from being God on that account.

“If my apostle Paul, citing the scriptures as speaking of me, introduced these words; Let all the angels of God worship him. He, or the prophet who first used the words, could intend only such worship as was due to one so highly favoured of God.

VOLUSIAN.

HERE Volusian interrupted Photinus, apparently much agitated, having been extremely attentive, but never spoken during this day's conference: It is enough, cries he to Photinus, you need not go any farther. The evidence is so strong afforded by the holy Jesus himself, the arguments so convincing, that men have only to open their eyes to see the deplorable state of the whole christian world, at the end of the 18th century, in worshipping him, the creature equally with the creator, who is God alone blessed for ever. I am however highly obliged to Synesius, whether he intended it in kindness to me, or for his own satisfaction, for producing the most powerful arguments the case would allow, to reconcile persons to remain members of the established church, whatever be their objections to its doctrines and worship. For the frank and good-tempered inquiry and discussion, to which his arguments have given rise, hath convinced me, if I was not sufficiently convinced before, that I can no longer, with a quiet mind, continue to frequent the worship of the church of England, to which
I have

I have hitherto all my life belonged. I cannot say, or seem to say one thing with my mouth, to the all-seeing God, respecting himself, whilst my heart and better knowlege mean another. I cannot invoke God the Son, and God the holy ghost, as each of them Gods, while I believe them no gods at all, but the Father to be the only true God, in the express language and declaration of Jesus himself. But I am at a loss what to do: and if the public worship of Almighty God be a duty, of which I have no doubt, what methods to take, or where to turn myself.

The hour, however, reminds me of releasing my friends from a conversation, which, though kindly intended towards me, must be anxious and troublesome to them. But I hope, that by their assistance, for one day more, the dark clouds that hang over my mind will disperse, and day-light and peace appear.

PHOTINUS TO VICTORIN;

Reporting the conclusion of a conversation, from which Volusian perceives, how easily, and with what honour and credit, the service of the church of England may be reformed, with respect to the object of divine worship, in which it is now sadly erroneous.

I AM glad that you are pleased with the character which I gave, in answer to your inquiry, of Photinus, Bishop of Sirmium, in the fourth century; and with the short account that came along with it, of unitarian christians before, and after his time.

Of the causes of the great corruption of the gospel, in making Christ the supreme God, and the reason of its long continuance.

But you are disturbed at the thought of the doctrine of more divine persons, more gods, than one, making its appearance so very early in the christian church, being so directly contrary, as you are persuaded, to the teachings of Moses, and of Jesus Christ: And you wish I would in a few words tell you how

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to reply to those, who maintain, that what was of such antiquity, and so generally received, and has lasted so long, being at present the doctrine of the whole christian world, must have been true, and have come from the apostles themselves.

Unquestionably, all this appears very specious and imposing ; and it is not surprizing, that those, who are little acquainted with the history of the early christians, are dazzled by it : but the following statement of facts, which may be depended upon, will very easily shew, that it is fallacious and groundless. For it is, in the first place, far from being exact, to say, that the doctrine of more divine persons, more gods than one, was embraced by any christians, in the time of the apostles. The defection was gradual. The first followers of Christ, were all jews, *viz.* the apostles, with others mentioned in the New Testament ; who adhered strictly to the worship of the God of their fathers, the God who made the world, and all things in it ; honouring Jesus Christ, who was born among them, as his extraordinary prophet and messenger, especially promised to their nation ;

but who was also to be the Saviour and divine instructor of all mankind ; and who, after a life of labour, and painful exertion to bring men to virtue and immortal happiness, confirmed the truth of his divine mission, by yielding himself up to the torturing and infamous death of the cross, rather than save his life by denying it.

But the false philosophy of some learned men, who embraced christianity in the time of the apostles, would not suffer them to admit such a degrading idea of the divine head of their new religion, that he should have been thus exposed to pain and death ; although it be a circumstance that continually presents itself in the history of the evangelists. Thinking these last to be unlearned men, they probably made light of their testimony on this point, and scrupled not to add, of their own authority, that Christ had existed, how long they did not define, before he came upon earth ; asserting also at the same time, that he had only the appearance of a man, liable to sufferings and death ; but was not so in reality. There is scarce a fact in all antiquity, better attested, than that there were christians of this

cast, in the apostles' days, and that St. John wrote against them, in his epistles. Most probably his arguments, from his own personal knowledge, and his warm reproofs, put an end to them, and their unsupported fancies concerning Christ: for we hear little more of them afterwards. These were, however, immediately succeeded by other philosophic christians; one of whom, Justin the martyr, as he was called, who almost touched upon the times of the apostle John, brought in his doctrine of Platonism, and grafted it upon the gospel, boldly asserting, that Christ was an inferior god, such as was taught by Plato's philosophy, subordinate to the supreme Being; and this he imagined he found also in the Bible, and used several of the arguments for it, the futility of which Volusian so well exposed, in our second day's conversation, which you have received. And from the time of Justin, to the present hour, those who have stood up for the preexistence, or the divinity of Jesus Christ, have done little else but copy after, and retail the arguments of this truly pious, but much mistaken ancient.

I shall

I shall pass over in silence the complicated idolatry, into which the whole christian world fell by degrees after this, and in which it remained overwhelmed and buried for many long ages, till the reformation.

At that memorable period, the idolatrous worship of images and saints, which had lasted so long, was abolished by the generality of protestants, who separated from the church of Rome. Unfortunately, however, the principal reformers in different countries, Luther, Melancthon, Zuinglius, Calvin, and the english and scotch divines, did not suffer themselves to inquire, whether there were not also other false objects of worship retained by them, equally prohibited by the divine command; but, without examination, acquiesced in the doctrine of the trinity, as if it had immediately come down to them from heaven, instead of being fabricated, as it truly was, by early heathen christians, and schoolmen; and formed their new articles and confessions of faith upon it. It still continued to be a crime of the deepest dye, to call it in question, and they who persisted in denying Jesus, and the holy ghost to be gods equal to the Father,

were not suffered to live, but punished with the most dreadful deaths,

But many of lower rank, and of good sense, being now at liberty to read the scriptures, which they are recorded to have turned themselves to with uncommon eagerness and delight, and finding no trinity there, and that the holy Jesus was not God, or to be worshipped, but the Father only; they had the noble zeal and courage publicly to declare and inculcate this great truth, in various countries, and particularly in our own; for which they were, without mercy, burnt alive. And we gather from that honest historian, (o) Strype, that this extreme severity probably put a stop to the progress of this doctrine, which was spreading rapidly at that time, in the year 1550.

(o) "*Arianism* now shewed itself so openly, and was in such danger of spreading farther, that it was thought necessary to suppress it, by using more rugged methods than seemed agreeable to the merciful principles of the professors of the gospel."

Strype's Ecclesiastical Memoirs, Vol. II. p. 214.

Arianism was then a general name for every opinion that opposed the divinity of Christ,

Protestants

Protestants now, like the papists, persecuted those who could not believe Christ to be God, with unrelenting cruelty. Queen Elizabeth, to her everlasting disgrace, lighted again the fires in Smithfield, to burn some unhappy persons, who, among other opinions, did not allow Jesus to be the supreme God. Better could not be expected from her narrow-minded successor, who caused Edward Wightman, of Burton upon Trent, to be burnt alive at Coventry, and (p) Bartholomew Legatt

(p) The reader will perhaps be curious to see the form of the king's warrant for burning Legatt: the latter part of which is as follows:

“Whereas the Holy Mother Church hath not further to do and to prosecute on this part; the same reverend Father hath left the aforesaid Bartholomew Legatt as a blasphemous Heretick to our secular power, to be punished with condign punishment, as by the Letters Patent of the same reverend Father in Christ the Bishop of London in this behalf above made, hath been certified unto us in our Chancery. We therefore, as a zealot of Justice, and a Defender of the Catholick Faith, and willing to maintain and defend the Holy Church, and the Rights and Liberties of the same, and the Catholick Faith: And such Heresies and Errors every where what in us lieth, to root out and extirpate, and to punish with condign punishment such Hereticks so convicted, and deeming that such an Heretick

gatt in West-Smithfield ; both of them strict unitarians. The wickedness that was supposed to be in his opinions, was all that was alleged against the former : the latter is mentioned by his adversaries, as pious, learned, and in all respects an excellent character.

In the next reign, the same opinions were adopted, purely from reading the Bible, by Mr. John Biddle, the Socinian, as he is commonly stiled, by way of reproach. For avowing these, and particularly for denying Jesus to be the most high God, he was accused, and adjudged to be burnt alive, by the Presbyterian party ; but Cromwell, who better

in form aforesaid, convicted and condemned according to the laws and customs of this our kingdom of England in this part accustomed, ought to be burned with fire ; We do command you, that the said Bartholomew Legatt, being in your custody, you do commit publicly to the fire, before the people, in a public and open place in West-Smithfield, for the cause aforesaid ; and that you cause the said Bartholomew Legatt to be really burned in the same fire, in detestation of the said crime, for the manifest example of other Christians, lest they slide into the same fault, and this that in no wise you omit, under the peril that shall follow thereon. Witness, &c." A narration of the burning of Bartholomew Legatt, &c. in Truth brought to light, 1692.

under-

understood (q) the rights of conscience, interposed to save him out of their hands. He was Master of Arts of the university of Oxford, and a great honour to it, by his learning and singular virtues, as well as courage in the cause of divine truth. And the day will come, may it not be very remote! when that noble seminary, sensible of the peerless unrivalled majesty of the One God and Father of all, for which this excellent person was at last condemned to die in a dungeon, shall erect a monument of honour to his name.

In the two following reigns, the noble fruits appeared of that free inquiry into the scriptures, which many had been emboldened to make, during the struggles for liberty, and whilst the ecclesiastical power was kept under. Some of the most eminent divines, and dig-

(q) It was one of the capital articles of the Protector's government, which redounds highly to his honour; Art. 37. *"That such as profess faith in God by Jesus Christ, though differing in judgment from the doctrine, worship, or discipline publicly held forth, shall not be restrained from, but protected in the profession of the faith and exercise of their religion, &c."* Art. 38. *"That all laws, statutes, ordinances, &c. to the contrary of the aforesaid liberty, shall be esteemed as null and void."*

The law for burning hereticks was repealed in 1676.

nitaries

nitaries of the church of England, did not think themselves discredited by living in friendship with professed Socinians, and some embraced their sentiments. By these, and some laymen of note, among whom Mr. Locke is named, and under the patronage of, Mr. Firmin, a citizen of London, never to be mentioned but in terms of the highest honour, were published those called Unitarian Tracts; which might have rendered all subsequent writings in the same cause unnecessary, had a proper attention been paid to them. Their authors were all members of the church of England. And as they were many of them persons of great worth and eminence, much might have been expected from their joint endeavours in promoting the proper unity of the Divine Being. But all came to nothing, or rather no immediate good effect followed; which was probably owing to their conformity to the trinitarian worship of the church, by which they confuted their own arguments for the necessity of a reformation in it. This was seen at last, and owned by some of them.

The Act of Toleration brought no relief to the conscientious worshiper of the one true God,

God, the Father, to the exclusion of Jesus Christ or any other person as God along with him. Oppugners of the trinity are expressly excepted out of that Act.

And by the Act of the 9th and 10th of William III. persons educated in ; or who have professed the christian religion within this realm, by writing, preaching, teaching, or advised speaking, denying any one of the persons of the holy Trinity to be God—— such persons, upon conviction, for the first offence, “ shall be adjudged incapable and disabled in law, to all intents and purposes whatsoever, to have or enjoy any office or offices, employment or employments, ecclesiastical, civil, or military, or any part of them, or any profit or advantage appertaining to them or any of them ; and for the second offence, shall be disabled to sue in any court, to be guardian of any child, or executor or administrator to any person, or capable of any legacy or deed of gift, or to bear any office or benefice for ever, within this realm, and shall suffer imprisonment for the space of three years.”

From this brief historical deduction, Victorin, you perceive, that this doctrine of more
divine

divine persons, more gods than one, first imported into the religion of Christ by heathen converts, has kept its ground to this day, not by any solid arguments taken from the scriptures, but by the prevention of all free examination into them, whereby error might be detected; it having been for many ages, and still, to this hour, being unsafe and dangerous, by the laws of the civil power in every christian country, to profess or publish any doctrine concerning Christ, or the holy ghost, contrary to that established by the state. But now that men have not been afraid to publish what appears to them to be the truth on this subject, notwithstanding unreasonable and unrighteous laws to the contrary, and are more and more encouraged to it by a general tacit condemnation of such laws; this polytheistical doctrine is falling into discredit; and the doctrine of the divine unity is making its way in all countries, especially in our own.

But I wish you may not think that I have detained you too long from seeing what was the issue of Volusian's anxieties, in which the last day's conversation left him. I proceed therefore with what followed.

THE FIFTH DAY.

AFTER the conversation of the former day, Volufian was observed to be extremely pensive, and not to mix with his friends on the several topics that were introduced, in that frank, unreserved manner that was usual with him : which was the more remarkable, as he was wont to say, that a man ought not to go into company with any thing about him, that might interrupt the hilarity of those he associated with.

It was afterward found to be caused by an anxiety, which he could not possibly shake off, how to conduct himself on the recent discovery that he had made, that the holy Jesus, whom he had hitherto considered as the supreme God, and object of worship, was no more than the favoured creature and messenger of the most high God to man : whether he was to go on notwithstanding to attend the public worship of one, who, he was persuaded, was not God ; or what to do.

In

In a few days, however, the gloom was dissipated, and he appeared even more chearful and vacant than he had been of some time. But as the same thoughts were still uppermost, the first convenient opportunity that he could espy, when the company were at leisure, and assembled together, without any preface, and with an easy, serene countenance, he entered upon the subject all at once.

VOLUSIAN.

You will be pleased, my friends, to hear, that I never felt myself happier than in this light of divine truth, which has lately broken in upon my mind, by which I can see my way clearly before me, upon the most important of all subjects, with respect to the Being who made me, and whom it is my first duty and happiness to adore.

To me indeed it now appears a truth so plain, and demonstrable, that the single person of Jehovah, the maker of heaven and earth, is God alone, and Jesus Christ only his highly favoured messenger, and prophet, that it needs but to be laid before all, even those of the lowest understanding, in that simple manner
in

in which it has impressed me, and all will be brought to acknowledge it. I cannot therefore but look forward with satisfaction to the day, at no great distance, I hope, when the public sentiment will be changed, and every one will be eager to call for a corresponding change of our public forms of worship in this respect, being not able any longer to take a part in, and countenance, what will appear to them, as it now does to me, an idolatrous service.

MARCELLINUS.

How delightful is truth ! says Marcellinus, pleased with such an opening ; what peace and security is there in the possession of it ! especially in what relates to the knowledge of the great parent of all things ! It is plain that Volusian would not exchange its charms, and the sober joy he now feels, for all that the universe can bestow. And he has no regrets, whatever be the cast or colour of his future life here, unless that he did not sooner become acquainted with it. I wonder not, my welcome friend, and guest, that you are so deeply penetrated with the strong and invincible

cible evidence, that has so lately presented itself to your inquiring mind, from the scriptures, "*quod deus est singularis et unus*," as Lactantius often expresses himself; "that God is one single person." If the judgment were not previously warped and perverted, by the conceits and subtleties of theologians, almost literally taken in with our mother's milk; this strict unity of God, without a peer or rival, would be as evident to every rational mind, as the sun in the unclouded firmament at noon day, to one who has the use of the organs of sight.

But although it very naturally strikes you, Volufian, who have so recently been brought to see the light of this grand truth, that others must be equally affected with it, you must be sensible, from a little reflection on your own former state, and that of many of your friends at present, that such a change must be a work of time. From indolence, and a variety of motives, many are wholly indifferent to a question, which is of the utmost importance to them; who is God, their maker? A greater number, from education, without inquiry, believe, that there are three divine persons, whom

whom they are equally, and severally bound to worship, and nevertheless can maintain, that they are but one God: so far happy in the delusion, in never reflecting upon the objects of their devotion, as the thought would necessarily overwhelm their minds with inextricable confusion about them, what to do with so many of them. And yet it is undoubted, that a truth so momentous as that of the divine unity, so plainly inscribed in the book of nature, but legible in every page of divine revelation, as you, Volusian, have shewn, if placed before creatures capable of any degree of serious moral reflection, must move them, and force their attention.

You would however have had better grounds for pleasing yourself with the prospect of this much desired change taking place in the public worship of the church, if you had known any thing of an extraordinary advancement made towards it, from a very important quarter in the church itself. But indeed you have been so averse to every thing of this kind, Volusian, that your friends have always waved speaking on the subject, when you have been with them, to avoid giving uneasiness.

K

VOLUSIAN.

VOLUSIAN.
 I own, I do not wonder at this procedure of yours, says Volusian, though I am ashamed of myself now for having given occasion for it, and am truly sensible of the loss I have sustained by it.

MARCELLINUS.

You will perceive, proceeds Marcellinus, not having adverted to what Volusian was saying; to what a degree your prejudices in favour of the doctrines of the establishment, have shut up your mind from the knowledge of what was doing by churchmen themselves, in your ignorance of the fact of great notoriety, to which I allude; and which none wonders any intelligent member of the church of England should be unacquainted with.

VOLUSIAN.

UPON Marcellinus thus expatiating, without coming directly to the point, Volusian grew not a little impatient, and could not help saying; My good friends all, and particularly Marcellinus! I beg pardon for the trouble you have formerly had with such an
 obstinate

obstinate companion; but I assure you, that you may now tell me any thing, because it will not be lost or unheeded, and will sooth my mind much in its present state.

MARCELLINUS.

WHAT I have to mention, replies Marcellinus, and which I shall be no less glad to communicate than you to hear, my worthy friend, relates to one of the greatest ornaments of the church of England, whether you regard him as a scholar, philosopher, divine, or as a truly good man, which is beyond them all; none other than Dr. Clarke, the celebrated Rector of St. James's, Westminster.

This eminent person was under very extraordinary convictions of the necessity of reforming the liturgy of the church; and for some years before his death, had employed himself, at his leisure-hours, in making amendments in it throughout. The principal and most striking alterations made and proposed by him, were in the devotional parts, with respect to the object of worship.

And here he took the liberty of blotting out all those passages, in which the Son, or

the holy ghost, or holy spirit, are called God, or divine worship ascribed to either of them; retaining only those prayers and invocations, which were addressed to the one true God, and Father of all.

This was done by him, when his judgment and faculties were in their full vigour, having been finished, just before he was unexpectedly taken off by a fever, in his 54th year, a°. 1729.

This invaluable labour (r) of his father's, his worthy son, Mr. Clarke, presented to the British

(r) The first and the only public notice, as far as I can learn, that was given of this attempt of this eminent person, towards a reformation of the public service, was a few years after his death, in "Memoirs of the life and sentiments of the Rev. Dr. Samuel Clarke," by one who lived on very intimate terms with him, that famous sufferer for the doctrine of the Divine Unity, Mr. Emlyn. His words are; "He (Dr. Clarke) once shewed me that he had been making some emendations in his *Common-prayer* book; and the very last time, I think, I ever saw him, (the *March* before he died) and in some of our last discourse at parting, he asked me, if he had shewn me what he had been doing in his *Common-prayer*. I said I had just seen it once; he added, that it *should not be lost*. With what design or view he had done it, he never said to me. I suppose, by something I cast my eye upon, that one design was to correct some improper expressions, the meaning

British Museum, about twenty years ago; that it might be deposited, and preserved among the most precious things of the nation (s). And there it is now to be seen by you, Volusian, or by any other person.

I cannot, however, finish what I have to say on this invaluable deposit, without adding; that there is in the library here, an extract of a letter from Archbishop Herring to Dr. Jortin, after the Archbishop had gotten a sight of this work of Dr. Clarke's. And his character of it, to so estimable a person, and fine a scholar, as Dr. Jortin, well marks the high opinion both of them had of these emendations of Dr. Clarke, and the concern it gave the Archbishop, that the temper of the nation would not permit them to be adopted; although it might have meaning whereof might be obscure, and the phrase harsh and uncouth, even where no points of doctrine were concerned. But I hardly supposed he ever finished the work, being so soon after taken away from us." Emlyn's works, Vol. II. p. 499. It appears, from Mr. Emlyn's being a stranger to it, that not many of Dr. Clarke's friends, were apprized of the extent of his difficulties, with regard to the worship of the church he belonged to; or how anxious he must have been for a reformation in that respect.

(s) Dr. Clarke's own title is, "Amendments, humbly proposed to the consideration of those in authority, of the book of Common-prayer, &c."

been wished, that he had taken some way to express these sentiments before the public, as well as to his friend in private, to whom he thus writes ;

CROYDON, AUG. 7, 1753.

(*t*) " I have seen Dr. Clarke's Common-Prayer book. I have read it ; have approved the temper, and wisdom of it. But into what times are we fallen, after so much light, and so much appearance of moderation, that one can only wish for the success of truth ! The world will not bear it."

(*t*) See New Review, Vol. I, p. 241. by Henry Maty, A.M. learned, ingenious, and of most singular integrity. He was a confessor of the truth of the Divine Unity ; suffering the loss of many things for it. The admission of the Amendments of the Liturgy proposed by Dr. Clarke, would have kept him in his station in the church.

To these testimonies of approbation of Dr. Clarke's reformed liturgy, may be added that of another Prelate, more lately gone off this mortal stage, the learned, gentle and humane Dr. Law, Bishop of Carlisle ; than whom no one ever had a mind more open to truth, or was more communicative of it. Very signal proofs might be produced, how joyful an event it would have been to him, if he could have seen Dr. Clarke's reformation of the Liturgy adopted throughout the nation.

VOLUSIAN.

of VOLUSIAN.

VOLUSIAN had listened with great attention, and pleasure in his countenance, whilst Marcellinus was speaking; and immediately applying himself to him, I am extremely obliged to you, says he, for this curious history of a most important fact indeed, which I assure you is perfectly new to me, and I believe to the far greater part of the members of the established church. For so wrapt up are we in the notion of every thing being most perfect in it, especially with regard to its worship, that we cannot bear to hear, or read of any the least alteration in it, no not even in the uncharitable creed, wrongly it seems, ascribed to St. Athanasius, and composed above a hundred years after he was in his grave. But though I was taught from my youth, that Dr. Clarke was not quite sound in some of his opinions, I was taught at the same time to think with reverence of his writings and character in general. And I should be highly obliged to you, Marcellinus, if you could favour me with any general idea of the alterations he has proposed, with respect to the object of divine worship, in his amend-

ments of the book of Common-prayer, which you speak of.

MARCELLINUS.

I AM happy, says Marcellinus, that I have it in my power to gratify you. I have a book here published some years since, in which all the alterations you wish to see, are transcribed, in their regular order, from Dr. Clarke's manuscript; and with the leave of the company, I will read them over to you. Upon which they all nodded their assent; and Marcellinus, taking the book off a shelf that was near him, read as follows (u);

A list of exceptionable parts of the liturgy, with respect to the object of worship; all of which, are either quite struck out, or changed, by Dr. Clarke.

Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost:	} struck out and changed, wherever it is ordered to be read.
As it was in the beginning, is now,	
and ever shall be, world without	
end.	

(u) The Apology — on resigning the Vicarage of Catterick, Yorkshire, p. 185, &c.

Te

Te Deum.

Thou art the king of glory, O Christ.

Thou art the everlasting Son of the Father.

When thou tookest upon thee to deliver man, thou didst not abhor the virgin's womb.

When thou hadst overcome the sharpness of death, thou didst open the kingdom of heaven to all believers.

Thou sittest at the right hand of God in the glory of the Father.

We believe that thou shalt come to be our judge.

We therefore pray thee help thy servants, whom thou hast redeemed with thy precious blood.

Make them to be numbered with thy saints in glory everlasting.

Lord have mercy upon us.

Christ have mercy upon us.

Lord have mercy upon us.

Prayer of St. Chrysostom.

—when two or three are gathered together in thy name,

changed; and the whole directed to God, and not to Christ.

quite struck out, here and every where.

changed to thy Son's name.

The

The creed of St. Athanasius.

struck out.

Litany.

O God the Son, redeemer of the world, have mercy upon us, miserable sinners.

O God the Holy Ghost, proceeding from the Father and the Son, have mercy upon us, miserable sinners.

O holy, blessed, and glorious Trinity, three persons and one God, have mercy upon us, miserable sinners.

—whom thou hast redeemed with thy most precious blood.

changed; and the whole directed to God.

By the mystery of thy holy incarnation, by thy holy nativity and circumcision; by thy baptism, fasting, and temptation;

By thine agony and bloody sweat; by thy cross and passion; by thy precious death and burial; by thy glorious resurrection and ascension; and by the coming of the Holy Ghost.

Son

Litany continued.

Son of God, we beseech thee to
hear us.

*Son of God, we beseech thee to
hear us.*

O Lamb of God, that takest
away the sins of the world,

Grant us thy peace.

O Lamb of God, that takest
away the sins of the world,

Have mercy upon us.

O Christ hear us.

O Christ hear us.

Lord have mercy upon us.

Lord have mercy upon us.

Christ have mercy upon us.

Christ have mercy upon us.

Lord have mercy upon us.

Lord have mercy upon us.

From our enemies defend us,

O Christ.

O Son of David, have mercy
upon us.

Both now and ever vouchsafe
to hear us, O Christ.

Graciously hear us, O Christ,
graciously hear us, O Lord Christ,

The whole of
this quite
struck out.

changed, and
directed to
God.

struck out.

Prayer

Prayer in time of dearth and famine.

—to whom, with thee and the Holy Ghost be all honour and glory, now and for ever.

struck out here, and every where throughout the liturgy.

Collects.

First Sunday in Advent.

—who liveth and reigneth with thee and the Holy Ghost, now and ever.

changed here, and in all other places.

Third Sunday in Advent.

O Lord Jesu Christ, who, at thy first coming, &c.

changed, and addressed to God.

Fourth Sunday in Advent.

changed.

Christmas-Day.

—who liveth and reigneth with thee and the same Spirit, ever one God, world without end.

changed here, and every where.

St. Stephen's Day.

—who prayed for his murderers to thee, O blessed Jesus—

changed, and directed to God.

Trinity Sunday.

changed.

Nicene creed.

struck out.

Exbor.

Exhortation to the communion.

—above all, we must give most humble and hearty thanks to God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, for the redemption of the world by the death and passion of our Saviour Christ, both God and man.—

changed, and directed to God.

To him, therefore, with the Father, and the Holy Ghost, let us give continual thanks.

Preface upon the feast of Trinity.

struck out,

Prayer after the communion.

—by whom, and with whom in the unity of the Holy Ghost, all honour and glory be unto thee, O Father.

changed.

O Lord, the only begotten Son, Jesu Christ, O Lord God, Lamb of God, Son of the Father, that takest away the Sins of the world, have mercy upon us. Thou that takest away the sins of the world, have mercy upon us. Thou that takest away the sins of the world,

changed in-kind, and addressed only to God.

receive

receive our prayer. Thou that
sittest at the right hand of God
the Father, have mercy upon us.

For thou only art holy, thou
only art the Lord, thou only, O
Christ, with the Holy Ghost, art
most high in the glory of God the
Father.

changed in-
tirely, and
addressed only
to God.

Public baptism of infants.

—Ye have prayed, that our
Lord Jesus Christ would vouch-
safe to receive him, to release him
of his sins, to sanctify him with
the Holy Ghost, to give him the
kingdom of heaven and everlasting
life—Ye have heard also, that our
Lord Jesus hath promised in his
gospel to grant all these things.

changed here,
and also in the
baptism of
such as are of
riper years.

Catechism.

What dost thou chiefly learn in
these articles of the belief?

First, I learn to believe in God
the Father, who hath made me
and all the world.

struck out.

Secondly,

Secondly, in God the Son, who }
hath redeemed me and all mankind.

Thirdly, in God the Holy Ghost, } struck out.
who sanctifies me, and all the elect
people of God.

Matrimony.

God the Father, God the Son, }
and God the Holy Ghost, bless, } changed.
preserve, and keep you.

Visitation of the sick.

Absolution.

Our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath }
left power to his church to absolve }
all sinners, who truly repent and }
believe in him, of his great mercy }
forgive thee thine offences ; and, } quite struck
by his authority committed to me, } out.
I absolve thee from all thy sins,
in the name of the Father, and of
the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.

VOLUSIAN.

MARCELLINUS having finished, there was
a deep silence ; and after a short space, Vo-
lusian, with an air of concern and apparent
astonish-

astonishment, cried out; My friends, I can hardly credit my own ears, in what they have just now conveyed to me, which yet I have heard a thousand and a thousand times, without any such emotion. But I suppose, that the present state of my mind, added to the several addresses to, and invocations of Jesus Christ, and of the holy ghost, throughout the liturgy, being brought together under one point of view, makes me so affected with their strange, heathen appearance. Could any one ever imagine, that the worship of such a multiplicity of objects, could belong to those who have the sacred writings of the Old and New Testament for their rule, and the examples of Moses and the prophets, of Jesus Christ and his apostles, for their guide, in worshipping Jehovah, the single parent of the universe, and no other besides him? It is not to be wondered at, that there are such complaints of divine service being neglected, and our churches deserted. The ingenious lady, Miss H—h M—e, or whoever is the author of "The religion of the fashionable world," said to have been overlooked by a prelate high upon the bench; may compose, and publish ever so many pious and

and pathetic exhortations to the observance of the sabbath, and an attendance on the public established worship: but all will be in vain, whilst the church's service remains unaltered. The rational mind, that looks up only to nature's God, will turn away from such polytheistic worship; and still more, where enlightened by the precept and example of inspired teachers and prophets, and of the holy Jesus above all.

But I am wholly at a loss to account, how it was possible for so good a man as Dr. Clarke, after striking out, and condemning all these devotional addresses in the liturgy, offered to Jesus Christ, and the holy ghost, still to continue, not only to join in the worship he so deliberately disapproved, but to take an active part in it. Where is virtue; where is integrity; if such things are right, and to be defended, and persisted in?

MARCELLINUS.

I DID indeed expect, replies Marcellinus, that your upright soul would be scandalized at the appearance of such an inconsistent practice. But if it may not be wholly justified, many things may be alleged to abate so severe a censure of it.

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We

We who come, after it has been so fully demonstrated, that Christ, and the Holy Spirit, so far from being objects of worship, equal to the supreme Father, are not gods, or to be worshiped at all, do not sufficiently consider, that such persons as Dr. Clarke, who first saw these things to be wrong, were far from having the same impressions of them, and might reconcile themselves to continue in the church, and join in the offering up of prayers which they disapproved, from various motives, a persuasion that they could not do so much good in any other situation, and a design to pave the way for, and gradually to bring about the desired reformation. The not attending to these circumstances makes us imagine, that they had the same idea of the wrongness of such worship as we now have, and that they went as directly against their consciences, in their conformity to it, as we should do. But it was far otherwise. It certainly did not appear to Dr. Clarke, that he was an idolater (*w*), in worshiping Jesus Christ as God,

(*w*) Neither did it appear to the famous F. Socinus, that he was an idolater in worshiping Jesus Christ; who not only held it right to worship and pray to him, but carried

God, of which however you, Volufian, are fully, and upon juft grounds convinced. We do not find that his friend, Sir Ifaac Newton, refrained from the eftablifhed worship; altho' he probably went farther than Dr. Clarke, in holding Chrift to have been only a human creature, invefted with extraordinary powers, and a miffion from God. Even Mr. Whifton, for a long time, made himfelf eafy with publicly declaring, that although he attended the Athanafian worship of the church, he did not join in thofe parts of it, but paffed them over, as things with which he had no concern. At laft, however, he was fenfible that there was no way of making confcience quiet, but by a reformation of the liturgy itfelf. As Dr. Clarke died fomewhat fuddenly, and unexpectedly by himfelf, as well as his friends; when he feems barely to have finifhed

ried his zeal for it fo far, as to condemn thofe who could not come into his opinions, and worship Chrift as he did.

But this full perfuafion and confidence of the rightnefs of his Opinions, in Socinus, did not make him the lefs an idolater, or acquit him of a violation of the firft divine command, in worfhiping and paying divine honours to another perfon befides Jehovah, the fupreme God.

What a leffon this, to teach us all candour, and moderation in our cenfures of others!

his improvements of the liturgy, we know not what steps he might have taken afterwards to reduce them to practice. It appears, from that diligent exactness, with which he marked every address, and even every single word and phrase, that infringed upon the Divine Unity, how much he had at heart God's true worship, that of the single person of the Father only; and how exceedingly he must have been affected with the wide departure of the church of England from it.

God only knows the hearts of men; what influences they are under, and what are their designs. But from these and other circumstances, relating to Dr. Clarke, there is nothing improbable in supposing, that had his life been prolonged, he would have made some attempt to have procured an exclusion from the liturgy of the worship of all other persons, except the Father, the one only true God. And had he been indued with courage to exert himself to bring about such a reformation, in the article of divine worship, and who can say he would not have proposed it? there is no small ground of presumption to believe, that he would therein have had the countenance of his late Majesty George II.; but
most

most assuredly of his consort, Queen Caroline; who was intirely in Dr. Clarke's sentiments (*x*), with respect to the Athanasian trinity and worship. One circumstance also is reported on good authority, that by both their Majesties he was so highly esteemed, that had he lived, he would have been raised to the bench of bishops, and perhaps the see of Canterbury might have been offered to him (*y*).

And it is to be observed, that this was after the Doctor's sentiments concerning the Trinity had been many years published, and also opposed, and condemned in print, by the famous Dr. Waterland, and others; of which things those who had thoughts of placing him in such a high situation could not be ignorant.

And although Dr. Clarke might have been opposed in the introduction of such a plan of

(*x*) Since the writing of the above, I have been informed by a friend, well acquainted with Dr. Clarke's son, and who learned from him, that Queen Caroline had a copy of the "Amendments of the book of Common-prayer, &c. in her hands, at the time of Dr. Clarke's death; and that she afterwards returned the copy back to the family.

(*y*) Memoirs of the life of Dr. Samuel Clarke. Emlyn's works, Vol. II. p. 492.

reforming the liturgy, by one party in the church, he would have been greatly supported by others : perhaps by a majority, when it was conjectured, that the government in any degree favoured him. Besides it is well known, that many, particularly of the learned among the clergy, were already come over to embrace his opinions. Few of his rank have been equally lamented at their death, by the wife and good through the nation. A greater proof cannot be given, than presents itself in the amiable Bishop Rundle's letters, written at the time, to Mrs. Sandys, very lately published.

And now I am mentioning the probability of Dr. Clarke's reformed Common-prayer book meeting with many admirers, approvers, and open abettors, had it been made public and proposed to be used in his life time, you will excuse my relating a trifling anecdote, not wholly out of season I would hope, and which you may smile at if you please ; viz. that when this same reformed liturgy was first made use of, at the Chapel in Effex-street, in the Spring 1774, a generous patron and encourager of the design, and who constantly frequented

frequented the worship, was so struck with its scriptural simplicity, that in the warmth of his zeal and approbation, he would often say; that in seven year's time it would be adopted at St. James's.

This prediction indeed has not yet been verified; but I believe, that, if it could be fairly represented to a great personage, on what solid grounds of scripture the alterations, with respect to the object of worship, have been made; and that they originated with so excellent a person as Dr. Clarke, formerly Rector of St. James's, Westminster, and have been approved by learned and good men, and some of the first rank on the episcopal bench, and of the fairest characters in the establishment; he would himself not disapprove them.

VOLUSIAN.

I HOLD myself highly obliged to you, Marcellinus, replied Volusian, for the very agreeable information you have given me of things and characters in the last reign, so favourable to truth and free inquiry; which may afford hope that so liberal a race still subsists, although some very different men have lately been

brought forward. And I confess myself extremely blameable, for insinuating any thing to the disparagement of one, who so boldly stood forth against the Athanasian doctrine of the trinity, in his writings, as did the virtuous Dr. Clarke; especially as I could not be acquainted with the motives that might have hindered him from going on, at the time, to act as well as write, in bringing about the reformation, he had continually in his thoughts; nor could know what he might have done, had a longer life been given.

But whatever he, and other great men, did, or did not, in the like situations; I can never unite again, with my friends, in the worship of the church, as it now stands; in those addresses, and prayers, expunged out of the liturgy by Dr. Clarke, which are directed to Jesus and the holy spirit; whom I neither believe to be gods, nor to be worshiped; and cannot, without horror (pardon the expression, if offensive to any one,) think of being present and bearing a part, where these two supposed gods, are worshiped equally with the supreme Father,

And

And surely, my friends, this is not said out of any want of respect to that kind Saviour of men, whom I trust, I am disposed to love and honour, now and for ever, with the affection and reverence so justly due to him, for his perfect virtue and benevolence. But I cannot make him the supreme God, or invoke, or pray to him, as such; because I am persuaded, that if he could hear, and make himself known to me, he would call out from heaven, as he did formerly to Paul; "I am Jesus of Nazareth;" one who was once a mortal man like thyself: worship God.

As I must however always think it a duty to attend upon some public worship of the Almighty Being, and can frequent none, but where he alone, the single person of the Father is acknowledged and adored; I must still rely upon you, who are alone privy to my situation, and the change which has lately taken place in my mind, to suggest some expedient and advice that may be of use to me; especially when in the country, where I chiefly reside. For I am persuaded, that though mine is a new case to myself, it is not new to you, who must be acquainted with many similar to it,

it. And I hope that Photinus, who has hitherto to-day been a silent hearer of what has passed, will easily furnish me with a clue to deliver me out of this labyrinth of uncertainty, in which I am at present.

PHOTINUS.

I HAVE indeed, replies Photinus, quietly listened to the debate of to-day, and have had particular pleasure in attending, Volusian, to the progress of your feelings and convictions. And if there be any thing, for which I honour you more than another, it is for that your unmoveable resolution, never on any account to play tricks with or violate your own natural sense of things, of what is the right, the fair, the honest part before God and man, or go contrary to it, for any consideration. I applaud more than I can express, the declaration, that you trembled at the thought of lifting up, or seeming to lift up your voice to Jesus as God, to hear and to have mercy upon you, when your heart at the time told you, that he was no god, and could not hear you.

But that I may do what little is in my power to help you under your present difficulties; I would

would say, that in this happy, free country; free, from the general spirit and temper of the times, though not yet from the laws, in religious matters and disquisitions; there are not wanting, my friend, precedents and examples, to guide and encourage in situations like yours.

I may only point out, at a distance, an excellent person, of fine parts, cultivated, from the first and through life, with knowledge and science of every kind, particularly of God, his works, and his revealed will; who, many years since, wearied with, and unable any longer to endure the Athanasian worship of the church, two or three friends joining with him from the first, instituted a church in his own house: a practice truly apostolical. Here, himself the minister for a short space, Dr. Clarke's reformed liturgy made the devotional part of the service every Sunday. Fortunately, soon after, before he had looked out for a proper place, and a person to officiate regularly, he prevailed to have this reformed service of the church adopted by a considerable, and very liberal congregation of Dissenters in the place; now become a flourishing, professed

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society

of Unitarian christians. Happy, in seeing successful efforts to promote the pure worship of the God and Father of all, crown the serene evening of a long life, spent in pursuit of truth, and in doing good. So may it still be prolonged!

Mention might be made of other most valuable and virtuous characters, persons likewise of no inconsiderable note, bred up in the church of England, who have intirely withdrawn from it themselves and their families, to be at liberty to worship no other God, but the Father: attentive at the same time to keep up his public worship in their own houses; that their children, and also their men-servants, and their maid-servants, if so disposed, might have it in their power to know and to worship the only living and true God, as well as themselves.

Many very respectable individuals also, and others in the more private as well as in the lower walks of life, have had their minds enlightened to see this plainest truth of all others, that the God who made them, is one single person, whom alone they are to bow down to and worship; and have gradually
been

been seceding from the church, though not in such numbers yet, as to be much discerned, or missed in the great mass: who were not able to reconcile themselves to the thought of continuing to worship three gods: for no other way could they fairly and honestly interpret; no other construction could they possibly put upon the *Litany*; upon the (z) *gloria patri*, so often repeated; and many other passages of the church service.

And such instances must go on to multiply, and the light of the divine Unity to spread, till no place be found for error in this most important point. For there is a spirit of inquiry gone forth among many, to learn for themselves, what is to be known, concerning the great

(z) Viz. "*Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the holy ghost: as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen.*"

"Doubtless this is said by many very frequently, and with great devotion. But can it be said truly? Does not that deserve consideration? Is there any such doxology in the New Testament? If not, how can it be said to have been, *in the beginning*? Are not the books of the New Testament the most antient, and the most authentic christian writings in the world, &c. &c." Lardner, Vol. II. p. 178.

author

author of their existence, upon whom alone they have the most immediate and intimate dependence every moment, and must depend for ever. The times of darkness and ignorance are past. No longer will the christian world suffer itself to be imposed upon by abstruse, metaphysical definitions of a deity, consisting of three persons; a thing so strange, and unaccountable to the rational mind, that no one who reflects at all, will receive it without bringing it to the severest test of examination. And then it must immediately vanish, and come to nothing. For his works of nature, to those who can read him there, bespeaks its great author to be one wise, all-powerful, benevolent artist, and parent of his rational offspring. And they who go to the fountain-head of all extraordinary divine communications, now accessible to all, and open the Bible for themselves, will find there in every page, as you, Volusian, have so recently experienced, from the testimony of Moses and all the prophets, of Jesus and his apostles, that Jehovah, God, the maker of all things, and kind father of the universe, is one single person, and all-

all-perfect Being, to the exclusion of all other beings and persons whatsoever.

In the mean time, the supineness of not a few is most surprizing, in taking upon trust what others have decided before they were born, upon a subject of such infinite moment. A conduct of this kind is well reprov'd, with great force and seriousness, in a little piece, which I have noted, Marcellinus, in your collection. And with your good leave and that of our friends, I shall read it to you. And this I the rather propose, as it will very well close our conversations upon the present subject, which there seems to be no call for pursuing any farther; since Volusian, after satisfying himself, that the worship of the church established is such as he cannot with a good conscience any longer attend, does now, I flatter myself, see his way plain before him, how to act.

The author is a gentleman of learning and abilities above my praise, who was educated a member of the church of England, but retired from his connections with it, because in his estimation, it held forth three gods as objects of divine worship.

I do

"I do not indeed see," says he, (a) "how a christian of any persuasion can justify to God and his conscience, a wilful neglect of such means of religious inquiry as his situation will afford, or a continuance in the public profession of those doctrines, which his understanding shall ultimately reject. If Truth in Opinion, and Sincerity in Profession, be in any case desirable, religious Truth, and religious Sincerity, is peculiarly so. We are required to worship God in Understanding, and in Truth; and we are forbidden to offer up at the divine Altar, the sacrifice of Fools. If the precepts of the Bible then, are to be esteemed as of any weight among those who profess the religion of the Bible, it is a duty incumbent upon them, before all other *religious* duties, to have some well-grounded opinion concerning that Being whom they profess to adore. A correspondence between our sentiments and professions, all men expect from us; but we seem to regard the God of Truth, as being far less nice in his notions of morality: and that in the solemn offices of

(a) Preface to Objections to the doctrine of the Trinity, &c. p. 4, 5, 6. Manchester. 1788. 10
devotion,

devotion, he will readily excuse the highest degree of wilful Ignorance, and wink at the habitual commission of wilful Hypocrisy."

"Christian reader! this is no matter of barren speculation; it strikes directly at our conduct through life on a point of serious importance. The public worship of God, we all consider as a duty of indispensable obligation: and whether we shall perform this worship in the way most acceptable to him, and most conformable to the precepts of the sacred writings; or in that way which best suits our Indolence, or coincides with our Interest; whether we shall pay to God the homage of an upright heart, or with gross negligence and solemn mockery, publicly repeat what we cannot understand, and join in professing what we do not believe; are subjects of inquiry, which (however easy to determine) every christian, of whatever denomination, must acknowledge to be of high concern."

THE CONCLUSION.

I HAVE now, Victorin, complied with your request, and given you a full account of the conversation held by our friends at *****; which had so much raised your curiosity, and that of the persons you mention. But I shall be sorry, and much disappointed, if it does not answer some better end with them, than of mere amusement. I hope it will excite them, if they have never yet seriously made the inquiry, to search, and satisfy their own minds, who the true God is, and to worship him only, and no other.

You will perceive, that the idolatry laid to the charge of, and as the company all agreed, proved against all the great churches, and almost all christians, in all countries, not excepting our own, is not any thing sinful, or wicked; but a most lamentable error concerning the deity, which has been long a reproach to the gospel, and a bar to its reception and progress in the world; and which therefore

fore all that wish well to it, should make haste to remove out of the way.

It will be no small satisfaction to you also to see that the famous Dr. Clarke, and other great ornaments of the church of England, since his time, were very desirous to discard out of the liturgy, not only all direct worship of Jesus Christ, and the holy spirit; but every word that implied divine honours to belong to them: which may afford a strong presumption, which for my part I believe to be well-grounded, that the like sentiments are entertained now, by many other thinking and learned persons in the church; who would be ready to come forth, and declare themselves, upon any proposals and prospect of such alterations to take place in the service, as are exhibited in Dr. Clarke's reformed liturgy. That eminent person did not indeed express himself in such strong terms concerning the worship of Christ, and of the holy spirit, which he sought to have abolished, as to call it *idolatry*; but his intire rejection of it amounted to much the same thing. Of this however, whether it be idolatrous or not, you will be able to form your own judgment from the *Third day's* debate.

It is a reflection, which falls heavy upon our nation, that boasts of being so highly enlightened, that, whilst the jews, by the testimony of Christ himself, worshiped Jehovah, the Father, the one true God, and still worship him; and mahometans, who worship the God of Abraham, do the same; christians, in this country, in the judgment of the excellent persons above named, worship two other divine persons, two other gods, upon a line of equality with the supreme Father, who alone was worshiped by Moses and the prophets, by Jesus and his apostles; and who alone ought to be worshiped.

In the heathen world, if there were any true theists, as it might seem there were, whatever were their private sentiments, they universally conformed to the established polytheism, and joined in the worship of a rabble of gods, many of whom had confessedly been men and women of bad characters.

It will be well, if the same be not now the situation and conduct of men of sense and inquiry, who have not thrown off all religion, and who attend the established worship, in different christian countries. They worship

one God in private ; three divine persons, three gods, or more, in public. Can there be a louder call for a review and reformation of such establishments, from time to time, than this offers ?

Amidst the unavoidable instances of partial, temporary hardship, suffering, loss and confusion, attending the wonderful revolution, which divine providence hath brought about in a neighbouring country, we rejoice, (who will not rejoice ?) at the *Bastile* destroyed, at the dread of *Lettres de cachét*, and of an undefined, uncontrouled arbitrary power removed ; and in the pleasing prospect of a constitution settled, where liberty will be secured, where the sound of offensive war will no more be heard, and where religion will become placed on its only just and solid basis, that of free and rational inquiry. Under God, nothing that he has promised, tending to promote virtue and human happiness, is to be despaired of. Pure christianity, which has no other aim, we are persuaded, was at first planted by the Almighty ; and being under his protection, will prevail. Five years ago, what human sagacity could have calculated,

that within so short a space, such a rational scheme of public christian worship, as is exhibited in Dr. Clarke's reformed Common-prayer book, should have made its way into France, and become quietly settled? Read only the account in the margin, (b) taken from

(b) *Extract of a letter from an English Gentleman at Dunkirk, dated Aug. 10, 1791.*

"We now hope to enjoy the best benefits of the new Constitution, in the exercise of our own religion. On Sunday last an English Protestant church was opened here, an object that has been long in contemplation, but never before accomplished. The number of protestants in this place is very great, and the English are so numerous that the church was full, and many stood in the passage throughout the service, whilst others returned home for want of room. We have every appearance of forming a large and respectable society; for the plan that is adopted, has a view to the union of all the English Protestants, whether they have formerly been Episcopalians, Presbyterians, or other Dissenters. The Church of England-liturgy is made use of, reformed upon the plan proposed by the late Dr. Samuel Clarke, Rector of St. James's, Westminster, in which all the exceptionable parts of the Common-prayer are omitted. It is a plan that gives very general satisfaction, and many of all parties interest themselves greatly in the cause."

"The National Assembly has provided very generously for those who dissent from the Established Church:

from one of our public prints, and which is otherwise well known to be authentic. How honourable

All sects have the liberty of conducting burials, baptisms, and marriages, according to their own forms, and a register of them is kept in the Chamber of the Tribunal. There are, in this town, two Dutch Chapels, and one Quaker meeting-house, but the English Church will probably be far more numerous than either of the others."

"The agreeable society kept up amongst the English families here, the cheapness of all sorts of provisions, the constant intercourse we have with England, the ease with which our few taxes are borne, and the liberality of sentiment which prevails among all ranks of men, added to the full and free exercise of all religions; will probably induce many of our countrymen, from different places, to settle in this town, whose commerce is in a flourishing state."

N. B. It is with great pleasure that I see the above letter produced in a valuable work, just published, as this sheet is printing off; together with the following additional information upon the subject, which I am glad to insert:

"In the same town another church has been opened by a clergyman, of the Church of England, in which the common service is used. A mistake was however made, which, as it was the first of the kind in France, I wish it may be the last. The minister, unluckily, brought over some of his high church prejudices with him, and attempted to sow his tares amongst the wheat, by urging some of the congregation not to be married by their own minister; *Because he was not ordained by a bishop.* This

honourable to a government, that all men, who demean themselves as good citizens, should be free to profess and practise any religion, or mode of religion, which they prefer, trinitarian, unitarian, jewish, mahometan, or pagan ! And of what benefit to truth, and free inquiry, will be the appointment of similar liberal societies for public christian worship, in other great trading towns in that country, whither englishmen shall resort, and become settled ; which is an event to be expected.

wife admonition was treated as it deserved, and served only to create a smile. I have thought it right to mention this circumstance, as I am a sincere friend to the spread of Christianity, under any of its forms. Any thing of religion is better than indolence, and vice, and that stupidest of all stupid ignorance, attachment to prejudices *because* they are prejudices. With my best wishes, therefore, of success to any of the clergy of the church of England, who may endeavour to spread the reformed religion in France, I have only to express my hope, that they will carefully avoid the blunder of their *Dunkirk* brother."

"In the same town there are a number of Quakers, who have lately opened a place for religious worship, which I am informed is respectfully attended."—See p. 417, 418, of *The French Constitution : with Remarks, &c. &c.* By Benjamin Flower, London, printed 1792.

The

The kind parent of the universe will accept the worship of his creatures, who approach him with good dispositions, however it may be wrong, superstitious, or idolatrous. Nevertheless, where they enjoy the means of inquiry, and of attaining a better knowledge of himself, and of his unequalled glory and perfections, he will require a suitable conduct, and sincerity in them. For, to keep sight of the subject, which has been so long before you, he will be far from beholding with approbation their joining in his public worship, with himself, and worshipping as equal to him, two other divine persons, as Gods, whom they do not believe to be Gods, and whom they never think of worshipping in private, but but would be self-condemned in the very thought of attempting it.

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* * * The numerals in roman characters refer to the
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E R R A T A.

- Page 20, l. 7, for *picqued* read *piqued*.
 73, l. 15, dele *other*.
 88, l. 5, for *whilst* read *now that*.
 130, l. 6, for *proceeds* read *proceeded*.

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